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THE

LANCASHIRE WITCHES.

A Romance of Pendle Forest.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

Sir Jeffery.—Is there a justice in Lancashire has so much skill in witches as I have? Nay, I'll speak a proud word, you shall turn me loose against any Witch-finder in Europe. I'd make an ass of Hopkins if he were alive.

SHADWELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

[THE AUTHOR RESERVES TO HIMSELF THE RIGHT OF ISSUING A GERMAN TRANSLATION IN PRUSSIA.]

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

BOOK THE FIRST.

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER IX.

PAGE

THE TWO PORTRAITS IN THE BANQUETING-HALL 3

CHAPTER X.

THE NOCTURNAL MEETING 64

BOOK THE SECOND.

Pendle Forest.

CHAPTER I.

FLINT 101

CHAPTER II.

READ HALL 122

CHAPTER III.

THE BOGGART'S GLEN 134

CHAPTER IV.
PAGE
THE REEVE OF THE FOREST 147

CHAPTER V.
BESS'S O' TH' BOOTH 162

CHAPTER VI.
THE TEMPTATION 182

CHAPTER VII.
THE PERAMBULATION OF THE BOUNDARIES 202

CHAPTER VIII.
ROUGH LEE 234

CHAPTER IX.
HOW ROUGH LEE WAS DEFENDED BY NICHOLAS . . . 253

CHAPTER X.
ROGER NOWELL AND HIS DOUBLE 272

CHAPTER XI.
MOTHER DEMDIKE 285

CHAPTER XII.
THE MYSTERIES OF MALKIN TOWER 303

THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES.

BOOK THE FIRST.

[CONTINUED.]

THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TWO PORTRAITS IN THE BANQUETING-HALL.

THE banqueting-hall lay immediately under the long gallery, corresponding with it in all but height; and though in this respect it fell somewhat short of the magnificent upper room, it was quite lofty enough to admit of a gallery of its own for spectators and minstrels. Great pains had been taken in decorating the hall for the occasion. Between the forest of stags' horns that branched from the gallery rails were hung rich carpets, intermixed with garlands of flowers, and banners painted with the arms of the Assheton family, were suspended from the corners. Over the fire-place, where despite the advanced season, a pile of turf and wood was burning, were hung two panoplies of arms, and above them, on a bracket was set a complete suit of mail, once belonging to Richard Assheton, the first possessor of

the mansion. On the opposite wall hung two remarkable portraits,—the one representing a religious votaress in a loose robe of black, with wide sleeves, holding a rosary and missal in her hand, and having her brow and neck entirely concealed by the wimple, in which her head and shoulders were enveloped. Such of her features as could be seen were of extraordinary loveliness, though of a voluptuous character, the eyes being dark and languishing, and shaded by long lashes, and the lips carnation-hued and full. This was the fair votaress Isole de Heton, who brought such scandal on the Abbey in the reign of Henry VI. The other portrait was that of an abbot, in the white gown and scapulary of the Cistertian order. The countenance was proud and stern, but tinctured with melancholy. In a small shield at one corner the arms were blazoned—argent, a fess between three mullets, sable, pierced of the field, a crescent for difference — proving it to be the portrait of John Paslew. Both pictures had been found in the Abbot's lodgings, when taken possession of by Richard Assheton, but they owed their present position to his descendant, Sir Ralph, who discovering them in an out-of-the-way closet, where they had been cast aside, and struck with their extraordinary merit, hung them up as above stated.

The long oaken table, usually standing in the middle of the hall, had been removed to one side, to allow free scope for dancing and other pastimes, but it was still devoted to hospitable uses, being covered with trenchers and drinking-cups, and spread for a substantial repast.

Near it stood two carvers, with aprons round their waists, brandishing long knives, while other yeomen of the kitchen and cellar were at hand to keep the trenchers well supplied, and the cups filled with strong ale, or bragget, as might suit the taste of the guests. Nor were these the only festive preparations. The upper part of the hall was reserved for Sir Ralph's immediate friends, and here, on a slightly-raised elevation, stood a cross table, spread for a goodly supper, the snowy napery being ornamented with wreaths and ropes of flowers, and shining with costly vessels. At the lower end of the room, beneath the gallery, which it served to support, was a Gothic screen, embellishing an open armory, which made a grand display of silver plates and flagons. Through one of the doorways contrived in this screen the May Day revellers were ushered into the hall by old Adam Whitworth, the white-headed steward.

"I pray you be seated, good masters, and you, too, comely dames," said Adam, leading them to the table, and assigning each a place with his wand. "Fall to, and spare not, for it is my honoured master's desire you should sup well. You will find that venison pasty worth a trial, and the baked red deer in the centre of the table is a noble dish. The fellow to it was served at Sir Ralph's own table at dinner, and was pronounced excellent. I pray you try it, masters.—Here Ned Scargill, mind your office, good fellow, and break me that deer. And you, Paul Pimlot, exercise your craft on the venison pasty."

And as trencher after trencher was rapidly filled by the two carvers, who demeaned themselves in their task like men acquainted with the powers of rustic appetite, the old steward addressed himself to the dames.

"What can I do for you, fair mistresses?" he said. "Here be sack possets, junkets and cream, for such as like them—French puffs and Italian puddings, right good, I warrant you, and especially admired by my honourable good lady. Indeed, I am not sure she hath not lent a hand herself in their preparation. Then here be fritters in the court fashion, made with curds of sack posset, eggs, and ale, and seasoned with nutmeg and pepper. You will taste them, I am sure, for they are favourites with our sovereign lady, the Queen. Here, Gregory, Dickon—bestir yourselves, knaves, and pour forth a cup of sack for each of these dames. As you drink, mistresses, neglect not the health of our honourable good master Sir Ralph and his lady. It is well—it is well. I will convey to them both your dutiful good wishes. But I must see all your wants supplied. Good Dame Openshaw, you have nought before you. Be prevailed upon to taste these dropt raisins or a fond pudding. And you, too, sweet Dame Tetlow. Squire Nicholas gave me special caution to take care of you, but the injunction was unneeded, as I should have done so without it. —Another cup of canary to Dame Tetlow, Gregory. Fill to the brim, knave—to the very brim. To the health of Squire Nicholas," he added, in a low tone, as he handed the brimming goblet to the blushing

dame; "and be sure and tell him, if he questions you, that I obeyed his behests to the best of my ability. I pray you taste this pippin jelly, dame. It is as red as rubies, but not so red as your lips; or some leach of almonds, which, lily white though it be, is not to be compared with the teeth that shall touch it."

"Odd's heart! mester steward, yo mun ha' larnt that protty speech fro' th' squoire himself," replied Dame Tetlow, laughing.

"It may be the recollection of something said to me by him, brought to mind by your presence," replied Adam Whitworth, gallantly. "If I can serve you in aught else, sign to me, dame.—Now knaves, fill the cups—ale or bragget, at your pleasure, masters. Drink and stint not, and you will the better please your liberal entertainer and my honoured master."

Thus exhorted, the guests set seriously to work to fulfil the hospitable intentions of the provider of the feast. Cups flowed fast and freely, and ere long little was left of the venison pasty but the outer crust, and nothing more than a few fragments of the baked red deer. The lighter articles then came in for a share of attention, and salmon from the Ribble, jack, trout, and eels from the Hodder and Calder, boiled, broiled, stewed, and pickled, and of delicious flavour, were discussed with infinite relish. Puddings and pastry were left to more delicate stomachs, —the solids only being in request with the men. Hitherto, the demolition of the viands had given sufficient employment, but now the edge of appetite beginning to

be dulled, tongues were unloosed, and much merriment prevailed. More than eighty in number, the guests were dispersed without any regard to order, and thus the chief actors in the revel were scattered promiscuously about the table, diversifying it with their gay costumes. Robin Hood sat between two pretty female morris-dancers, whose partners had got to the other end of the table; while Ned Huddlestone, the representative of Friar Tuck, was equally fortunate, having a buxom dame on either side of him, towards whom he distributed his favours with singular impartiality. As porter to the Abbey, Ned made himself at home; and, next to Adam Whitworth, was perhaps the most important personage present; continually roaring for ale, and pledging the damsels around him. From the way he went on, it seemed highly probable, he would be under the table before supper was over; but Ned Huddlestone, like the burly priest, whose gown he wore, had a stout bullet head, proof againt all assaults of liquor; and the copious draughts he swallowed, instead of subduing him, only tended to make him more uproarious. Blessed also with lusty lungs his shouts of laughter made the roof ring again. But if the strong liquor failed to make due impression upon him, the like cannot be said of Jack Roby, who, it will be remembered, took the part of the Fool, and who, having drunk overmuch, mistook the hobby horse for a real steed, and in an effort to bestride it, fell headforemost on the floor, and being found incapable of rising,

was carried out to an adjoining room, and laid on a bench. This, however, was the only case of excess, for though the Sherwood foresters emptied their cups often enough to heighten their mirth, none of them seemed the worse for what they drank. Lawrence Blackrod, Mr. Parker's keeper, had fortunately got next to his old flame, Sukey Worseley; while Phil Rawson, the forester, who enacted Will Scarlet, and Nancy Holt, between whom an equally tender feeling subsisted, had likewise got together. A little beyond them sat the gentleman usher, and parish clerk, Sampson Harrop, who piquing himself on his good manners, drank very sparingly, and was content to sup on sweetmeats and a bowl of fleetings, as curds separated from whey are termed in this district. Tom the piper and his companion, the taborer, ate for the next week, but were somewhat more sparing in the matter of drink, their services as minstrels being required later on. Thus the various guests enjoyed themselves according to their bent, and universal hilarity prevailed. It would be strange indeed if it had been otherwise, for what with the good cheer, and the bright eyes around them, the rustics had attained a point of felicity not likely to be surpassed. Of the numerous assemblage more than half were of the fairer sex; and of these the greater portion were young and good looking, while in the case of the morris-dancers, their natural charms were heightened by their fanciful attire.

Before supper was half over it became so dark that

it was found necessary to illuminate the great lamp suspended from the centre of the roof, while other lights were set on the board, and two flaming torches placed in sockets on either side of the chimney-piece. Scarcely was this accomplished when the storm came on, much to the surprise of the weatherwise, who had not calculated upon such an occurrence, not having seen any indications whatever of it in the heavens. But all were too comfortably sheltered, and too well employed to pay much attention to what was going on without, and, unless when a flash of lightning more than usually vivid dazzled the gaze, or a peal of thunder more appalling than the rest broke overhead, no alarm was expressed, even by the women. To be sure, a little pretty trepidation was now and then evinced by the younger damsels, but even this was only done with the view of exacting attention on the part of their swains, and never failed in effect. The thunder-storm, therefore, instead of putting a stop to the general enjoyment, only tended to increase it. However, the last peal was loud enough to silence the most uproarious. The women turned pale, and the men looked at each other anxiously, listening to hear if any damage had been done. But as nothing transpired, their spirits revived. A few minutes afterwards word was brought that the Conventual Church had been struck by a thunder-bolt, but this was not regarded as a very serious disaster. The bearer of the intelligence was little Jennet, who said she had been caught in the ruins by the storm, and after

being dreadfully frightened by the lightning, had seen a bolt strike the steeple, and heard some stones rattle down, after which she ran away. No one thought of inquiring what she had been doing there at the time, but room was made for her at the supper table next to Sampson Harrop, while the good steward patting her on the head, filled her a cup of canary with his own hand, and gave her some cates to eat.

"Ey dunna see Alizon," observed the little girl, looking round the table, after she had drunk the wine.

"Your sister is not here, Jennet," replied Adam Whitworth, with a smile. "She is too great a lady for us now. Since she came up with her ladyship from the green she has been treated quite like one of the guests, and has been walking about the garden and ruins all the afternoon with young Mistress Dorothy, who has taken quite a fancy to her. Indeed, for the matter of that, all the ladies seem to have taken a fancy to her, and she is now closeted with Mistress Nutter in her own room."

This was gall and wormwood to Jennet.

"She'll be hard to please when she goes home again, after playing the fine dame here," pursued the steward.

"Then ey hope she'll never come home again," rejoined Jennet, spitefully, "fo' we dunna want fine dames i' our poor cottage."

"For my part I do not wonder Alizon pleases the gentle folks," observed Sampson Harrop, "since such

pains have been taken with her manners and education; and I must say she does great credit to her instructor, who for reasons unnecessary to mention, shall be nameless. I wish I could say the same for you, Jennet; but though you're not deficient in ability you've no perseverance or pleasure in study."

"Ey knoa os much os cy care to knoa," replied Jennet, "an more than yo con teach me, Mester Harrop. Why is Alizon always to be thrown i' my teeth?"

"Because she's the best model you can have, rejoined Sampson. "Ah, if I'd my own way wi' ye, lass, I'd mend your temper and manners. But you come of an ill stock, ye saucy hussey."

"Ey come fro' th' same stock as Alizon, onny how," said Jennet.

"Unluckily, that cannot be denied," replied Sampson; "but you're as different from her as light from darkness."

Jennet eyed him bitterly, and then rose from the table.

"Ey'n go," she said.

"No—no; sit down," interposed the good-natured steward. "The dancing and pastimes will begin presently, and you will see your sister. She will come down with the ladies."

"That's the very reason she wishes to go," said Sampson Harrop. "The spiteful little creature cannot bear to see her sister better treated than herself. Go

your ways, then. It is the best thing you can do. Alizon would blush to see you here."

"Then ey'n een stay an vex her," replied Jennet, sharply; "boh ey winna sit near yo onny longer, Mester Sampson Harrop, who ca' yersel gentleman usher, boh who are nah gentleman at aw, nor owt like it, boh merely parish clerk an schoolmester, an a poor schoolmester to boot. Eyn go an sit by Sukey Worseley an Nancy Holt, whom ey see yonder."

"You've found your match, Master Harrop," said the steward, laughing, as the little girl walked away.

"I should account it a disgrace to bandy words with the like of her, Adam," rejoined the clerk, angrily; "but I'm greatly out in my reckoning, if she does not make a second Mother Demdike, and worse could not well befal her."

Jennet's society could have been very well dispensed with by her two friends, but she would not be shaken off. On the contrary, finding herself in the way, she only determined the more pertinaciously to remain, and began to exercise all her powers of teasing, which have been described as considerable, and which on this occasion proved eminently successful. And the worst of it was, there was no crushing the plaguy little insect; any effort made to catch her only resulting in an escape on her part, and a new charge on some undefended quarter, with sharper stinging and more intolerable buzzing than ever.

Out of all patience, Sukey Worseley at length ex-

claimed "Ey should loike to see ye swum, crosswise, i' th' Calder, Jennet, as Nance Redferne war this efternoon."

"May be ye would, Sukey," replied the little girl, "boh eym nah so likely to be tried that way as yourself, lass; an if ey war swum ey should sink, while yo, wi' your broad back and shouthers, would be sure to float, an then yo'd be counted a witch."

"Heed her not, Sukey," said Blackrod, unable to resist a laugh, though the poor girl was greatly discomfited by this personal allusion, "ye may ha' a broad back o' our own, an the broader the better to my mind, boh mey word on't ye'll never be ta'en fo a witch. Yo're far too comely."

This assurance was a balm to poor Sukey's wounded spirit, and she replied with a well-pleased smile, "Ey hope ey dunna look like one, Lorry."

"Not a bit, lass," said Blackrod, lifting a huge ale-cup to his lips. "Your health, sweetheart."

"What think ye then o' Nance Redferne ?" observed Jennet. "Is she neaw comely ?—ay, comelier far than fat, fubsy Sukey here—or than Nancy Holt wi' her yallo hure an frecklet feace—an yet ye ca' her a witch."

"Ey ca' thee one, theaw feaw little whean—an the dowter—an grandowter o' one—an that's more," cried Nancy. "Freckles i' your own feace, ye mismannert minx."

"Ne'er heed her, Nance," said Phil Rawson, putting his arm round the angry damsel's waist, and drawing her

gently down. "Every one to his taste, an freckles an yellow hure are so to mine. So dunna fret about it, an spoil your protty lips wi' pouting. Better ha' freckles o' your feace than spots o' your heart loike that ill-favort little hussey."

"Dunna offend her, Phil," said Nancy Holt, noticing with alarm the malignant look fixed upon her lover by Jennet. "She's dawngerous."

"Firrups tak her!" replied Phil Rawson. "Boh who the dule's that? Ey didna notice him efore, an he's neaw one o' our party."

The latter observation was occasioned by the entrance of a tall personage, in the garb of a Cistertian monk, who issued from one of the doorways in the screen, and glided towards the upper table, attracting general attention and misgiving as he proceeded. His countenance was cadaverous, his lips livid, and his eyes black and deep sunken in their sockets, with a bistre-coloured circle around them. His frame was meagre and bony. What remained of hair on his head was raven black, but either he was bald on the crown, or carried his attention to costume so far as to adopt the priestly tonsure. His forehead was lofty and sallow, and seemed stamped, like his features, with profound gloom. His garments were faded and mouldering, and materially contributed to his ghostly appearance.

"Who is it?" cried Sukey and Nance together.

But no one could answer the question.

"He dusna look loike a bein' o' this warld," observed

Blackrod, gaping with alarm, for the stout keeper was easily assailable on the side of superstition; "an there is a mowdy air about him that gies one the shivers to see. Ey've often heer'd say the Abbey is haanted; an that pale-feaced chap looks like one o' th' owd monks risen fro' his grave to join our revel."

"An see, he looks this way," cried Phil Rawson. "What flaming een! they mey the very flesh crawl o' one's booans.'

"Is it a ghost, Lorry?" said Sukey, drawing nearer to the stalwart keeper.

"By th' maskins, lass, ey conna tell," replied Blackrod; "boh whotever it be, ey'll protect ye."

"Tak care o' me, Phil," ejaculated Nancy Holt, pressing close to her lover's side.

"Eigh, that I win," rejoined the forester.

"Ey dunna care for ghosts so long os yo are near me, Phil," said Nancy, tenderly.

"Then ey'n never leave ye, Nance," replied Phil.

"Ghost or not," said Jennet, who had been occupied in regarding the new comer attentively, "ey'n go an speak to it. Ey'm nah afeerd, if yo are."

"Eigh do, Jennet, that's a brave little lass," said Blackrod, glad to be rid of her in any way.

"Stay!" cried Adam Whitworth, coming up at the moment, and overhearing what was said—"you must not go near the gentleman. I will not have him molested, or even spoken with, till Sir Ralph appears."

Meanwhile, the stranger without returning the glances

fixed upon him, or deigning to notice any of the company, pursued his way, and sat down in a chair at the upper table.

But his entrance had been witnessed by others besides the rustic guests and servitors. Nicholas and Richard Assheton chanced to be in the gallery at the time, and greatly struck by the singularity of his appearance, immediately descended to make inquiries respecting him. As they appeared below, the old steward advanced to meet them.

"Who the devil have you got there, Adam?" asked the squire.

"It passeth me almost to tell you, Master Nicholas," replied the steward; "and not knowing whether the gentleman be invited or not, I am fain to wait Sir Ralph's pleasure in regard to him."

"Have you no notion who he is?" inquired Richard.

"All I know about him may be soon told, Master Richard," replied Adam. "He is a stranger in these parts, and hath very recently taken up his abode in Wiswall Hall, which has been abandoned of late years, as you know, and suffered to go to decay. Some few months ago an aged couple from Colne, named Hewit, took possession of part of the hall, and were suffered to remain there, though old Katty Hewit, or Mouldheels, as she is familiarly termed by the common folk, is in no very good repute hereabouts, and was driven, it is said, from Colne, owing to her practices as a witch.

Be that as it may, soon after these Hewits were settled at Wiswall, comes this stranger, and fixes himself in another part of the hall. How he lives no one can tell, but it is said he rambles all night long, like a troubled spirit, about the deserted rooms, attended by Mother Mouldheels; while in the day time he is never seen."

"Can he be of sound mind?" asked Richard.

"Hardly so, I should think, Master Richard," replied the steward. "As to who he may be there are many opinions; and some aver he is Francis Paslew, grandson of Francis, brother to the Abbot, and being a Jesuit priest, for you know the Paslews have all strictly adhered to the old faith,—and that is why they have fled the country and abandoned their residence,—he is obliged to keep himself concealed."

"If such be the case, he must be crazed indeed to venture here," observed Nicholas; "and yet I am half inclined to credit the report. Look at him, Dick. He is the very image of the old Abbot."

"Yon portrait might have been painted for him," said Richard, gazing at the picture on the wall, and from it to the monk as he spoke, "the very same garb, too."

"There is an old monastic robe up stairs in the closet adjoining the room occupied by Mistress Nutter," observed the steward, "said to be the garment in which Abbot Paslew suffered death. Some stains are upon it, supposed to be the blood of the wizard Demdike,

who perished in an extraordinary manner on the same day."

"I have seen it," cried Nicholas, "and the monk's habit looks precisely like it, and if my eyes deceive me not, is stained in the same manner."

"I see the spots plainly on the breast," cried Richard. "How can he have procured the robe?"

"Heaven only knows," replied the old steward. "It is a very strange occurrence."

"I will go question him," said Richard.

So saying, he proceeded to the upper table, accompanied by Nicholas. As they drew near, the stranger arose, and fixed a grim look upon Richard, who was a little in advance.

"It is the Abbot's ghost!" cried Nicholas, stopping, and detaining his cousin. "You shall not address it."

During the contention that ensued, the monk glided towards a side door at the upper end of the hall, and passed through it. So general was the consternation, that no one attempted to stay him, nor would any one follow to see whither he went. Released, at length, from the strong grasp of the squire, Richard rushed forth, and not returning, Nicholas, after the lapse of a few minutes, went in search of him, but came back presently, and told the old steward he could neither find him nor the monk.

"Master Richard will be back anon, I dare say, Adam," he remarked; "if not, I will make further search

for him, but you had better not mention this mysterious occurrence to Sir Ralph, at all events, not until the festivities are over, and the ladies have retired. It might disturb them. I fear the appearance of this monk bodes no good to our family; and what makes it worse is, it is not the first ill omen that has befallen us to-day. Master Richard was unlucky enough to stand on Abbot Paslew's grave !"

"Mercy on us ! that was unlucky indeed !" cried Adam, in great trepidation. "Poor dear young gentleman. Bid him take especial care of himself, good Master Nicholas. I noticed just now, that yon fearsome monk regarded him more attentively than you. Bid him be careful, I conjure you, sir. But here comes my honoured master and his guests. Here, Gregory, Dickon, bestir yourselves, knaves ; and serve supper at the upper table in a trice."

Any apprehensions Nicholas might entertain for Richard were at this moment relieved, for as Sir Ralph and his guests came in at one door, the young man entered by another. He looked deathly pale. Nicholas put his finger to his lips in token of silence—a gesture which the other signified that he understood.

Sir Ralph and his guests having taken their places at the table, an excellent and plentiful repast was speedily set before them, and if they did not do quite such ample justice to it as the hungry rustics at the lower board had done to the good things provided for

them, the cook could not reasonably complain. No allusion whatever being made to the recent strange occurrence, the cheerfulness of the company was uninterrupted. but the noise in the lower part of the hall had in a great measure subsided, partly out of respect to the host, and partly in consequence of the alarm occasioned by the supposed supernatural visitation. Richard continued silent and pre-occupied, and neither ate nor drank; but Nicholas appearing to think his courage would be best sustained by an extra allowance of clary and sack, applied himself frequently to the goblet with that view, and ere long his spirits improved so wonderfully, and his natural boldness was so much increased that he was ready to confront Abbot Paslew, or any other abbot of them all, wherever they might chance to cross him. In this enterprising frame of mind he drew Richard aside and questioned him as to what had taken place in his pursuit of the mysterious monk.

"You overtook him, Dick, of course?" he said, "and put it to him roundly why he came hither where neither ghosts nor Jesuit priests, whichever he may be, are wanted. What answered he, eh? Would I had been there to interrogate him! He should have declared how he became possessed of that old moth-eaten, blood-stained, monkish gown, or I would have unfrocked him, even if he had proved to be a skeleton. But I interrupt you. You have not told me what occurred at the interview?"

"There was no interview," replied Richard, gravely.

"No interview!" echoed Nicholas. "S'blood, man! —but I must be careful, for Doctor Ormerod and Parson Dewhurst are within hearing, and may lecture me on the wantonness and profanity of swearing. By Saint Gregory de Northbury!—no, that's an oath too, and what is worse, a Popish oath. By—I have several tremendous imprecations at my tongue's end, but they shall not out. It is a sinful propensity, and must be controlled. In a word, then, you let him escape, Dick?"

"If you were so anxious to stay him, I wonder you came not with me," replied Richard; "but you now hold very different language from what you used when I quitted the hall."

"Ah, true—right—Dick," replied Nicholas; "my sentiments have undergone a wonderful change since then. I now regret having stopped you. By my troth! if I meet that confounded monk again, he shall give a good account of himself, I promise him. But what said he to you, Dick? Make an end of your story."

"I have not begun it yet," replied Richard. "But pay attention, and you shall hear what occurred. When I rushed forth, the monk had already gained the entrance-hall. No one was within it at the time, all the serving-men being busied here with the feasting. I summoned him to stay, but he answered not, and, still grimly regarding me, glided towards the outer door, which (I know not by what

chance) stood open, and passing through it, closed it upon me. This delayed me a moment; and when I got out, he had already descended the steps, and was moving towards the garden. It was bright moonlight, so I could see him distinctly. And mark this, Nicholas,—the two great blood-hounds were running about at large in the court-yard, but they slunk off, as if alarmed at his appearance. The monk had now gained the garden, and was shaping his course swiftly towards the ruined Conventual Church. Determined to overtake him I quickened my pace; but he gained the old fane before me, and threaded the broken aisles with noiseless celerity. In the choir he paused and confronted me. When within a few yards of him, I paused, arrested by his fixed and terrible gaze. Nicholas, his look froze my blood. I would have spoken, but I could not. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth for very fear. Before I could shake off this apprehension the figure raised its hand menacingly thrice, and passed into the Lacy Chapel. As soon as he was gone my courage returned, and I followed. The little chapel was brilliantly illuminated by the moon; but it was empty. I could only see the white monument of Sir Henry de Lacy glistening in the pale radiance."

"I must take a cup of wine after this horrific relation," said Nicholas, replenishing his goblet. "It has chilled my blood, as the monk's icy gaze froze yours. Body o' me! but this is strange indeed. Another oath. Lord help me!—I shall never get rid of the infernal—

I mean, the evil habit. Will you not pledge me, Dick?"

The young man shook his head.

"You are wrong," pursued Nicholas,—"decidedly wrong. Wine gladdeneth the heart of man, and restoreth courage. A short while ago I was downcast as you, melancholy as an owl, and timorous as a kid, but now I am resolute as an eagle, stout of heart, and cheerful of spirit; and all owing to a cup of wine. Try the remedy, Dick, and get rid of your gloom. You look like a death's head at a festival. What if you have stumbled on an ill-omened grave! What if you have been banned by a witch! What if you have stood face to face with the devil—or a ghost! Heed them not! Drink, and set care at defiance. And not to gainsay my own counsel, I shall fill my cup again. For, in good sooth! this is rare clary, Dick; and talking of wine, you should taste some of the wonderful Rhenish found in the abbot's cellar by our ancestor, Richard Assheton —a century old, if it be a day, and yet cordial and corroborative as ever. Those monks were lusty tipplers, Dick. I sometimes wish I had been an abbot myself. I should have made a rare father confessor —especially to a pretty penitent. Here, Gregory, hie thee to the master cellarer, and bid him fill me a goblet of the old Rhenish—the wine from the abbot's cellar. Thou understandest—or, stay, better bring the flask. I have a profound respect for the venerable

bottle, and would pay my devoirs to it. Hie away, good fellow."

"You will drink too much if you go on thus," remarked Richard.

"Not a drop," rejoined Nicholas. "I am blithe as a lark, and would keep so. That is why I drink. But to return to our ghosts. Since this place must be haunted I would it were visited by spirits of a livelier kind than old Paslew. There is Isole de Heton, for instance. The fair votaress would be the sort of ghost for me. I would not turn my back on her, but face her manfully. Look at her picture, Dick. Was ever countenance sweeter than hers—lips more tempting, or eyes more melting! Is she not adorable? Zounds!" he exclaimed, suddenly pausing, and staring at the portrait—"Would you believe it, Dick. The fair Isole winked at me—I'll swear she did. I mean, I will venture to affirm, upon oath, if required, that she winked."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Richard. "The fumes of the wine have mounted to your brain, and disordered it."

"No such thing," cried Nicholas, regarding the picture as steadily as he could—"she's leering at me now. By the Queen of Paphos! another wink. Nay, if you doubt me, watch her well yourself. A pleasant adventure this—ha—ha!"

"A truce to this drunken foolery," cried Richard, moving away.

"Drunken! s'death! recall that epithet, Dick," cried

Nicholas, angrily. "I am no more drunk than yourself, you dog. I can walk as steadily, and see as plainly as you; and I will maintain it at the point of the sword, that the eyes of that picture have lovingly regarded me; nay, that they follow me now."

"A common delusion with a portrait," said Richard; "they appear to follow *me*."

"But they do not wink at you as they do at me," said Nicholas, "neither do the lips break into smiles, and display the pearly teeth beneath them, as occurs in my case. Grim old abbots frown on you, but fair, though frail, votaresses smile on me. I am the favoured mortal, Dick."

"Were it as you represent, Nicholas," replied Richard, gravely, "I should say, indeed, that some evil principle was at work to lure you through your passions, to perdition. But I know they are all fancies engendered by your heated brain, which, in your calmer moments you will discard, as I discard them now. If I have any weight with you, I counsel you to drink no more, or you will commit some mad foolery, of which you will be ashamed hereafter. The discreeter course would be, to retire altogether, and for this you have ample excuse, as you will have to arise betimes to-morrow to set out for Pendle Forest with Master Potts."

"Retire!" exclaimed Nicholas, bursting into a loud, contemptuous laugh. "I like thy counsel, lad. Yes, I will retire when I have finished the old monastic Rhenish which Gregory is bringing me. I will retire

when I have danced the Morisco with the May Queen —the Cushion Dance with Dame Tetlow—and the brawl with the lovely Isole de Heton. Another wink, Dick. By our Lady! she assents to my proposition. When I have done all this, and somewhat more, it will be time to think of retiring. But I have the night before me, Dick—not to be spent in drowsy unconsciousness as thou recommendest, but in active, pleasurable enjoyment. No man requires less sleep than I do. Ordinarily, I 'retire,' as thou termest it, at ten, and rise with the sun. In summer I am abroad soon after three, and mend that if thou canst, Dick. To-night I shall seek my couch about midnight, and yet I'll warrant me I shall be the first stirring in the Abbey, and in any case I shall be in the saddle before thee."

"It may be," replied Richard, "but it was to preserve you from extravagance to-night that I volunteered advice, which from my knowledge of your character, I might as well have withheld. But let me caution you on another point. Dance with Dame Tetlow or any other dame you please—dance with the fair Isole de Heton, if you can prevail upon her to descend from her frame and give you her hand; but I object—most decidedly object—to your dancing with Alizon Device."

"Why so?" cried Nicholas—"why should I not dance with whom I please? And what right hast thou to forbid me Alizon? Troth, lad, art thou so ignorant of human nature as not to know that forbidden fruit

is the sweetest. It hath ever been so since the fall. I am now only the more bent upon dancing with the prohibited damsel. But I would fain know the principle on which thou erectest thyself into her guardian. Is it because she fainted when thy sword was crossed with that hot-headed fool, Sir Thomas Metcalfe, that thou flatterest thyself she is in love with thee. Be not too sure of it, Dick. Many a timid wench has swooned at the sight of a naked weapon, without being enamoured of the swordsman. The fainting proves nothing. But grant she loves thee — what then? An end must speedily come of it, so better finish at once, before she be entangled in a mesh from which she cannot be extricated without danger. For hark thee, Dick, whatever thou mayst think, I am not so far gone that I know not what I say, neither is my vision so much obscured that I see not some matters plainly enough, and I understand thee and Alizon well, and see through ye both. This matter must go no further. It has gone too far already. After to-night you must see her no more. I am serious in this—serious *inter pocula*, if such a thing can be. It is necessary to observe caution, for reasons that will at once occur to thee. Thou canst not wed this girl—then why trifle with her till her heart be broken."

"Broken it shall never be by me!" cried Richard.

"But I tell you it will be broken, if you do not desist at once," rejoined Nicholas. "I was but jesting when I said I would rob you of her in the Morisco, though it

would be charity to both, and spare you many a pang hereafter were I to put my threat into execution. However, I have a soft heart where aught of love is concerned, and having pointed out the risk you will incur, I shall leave you to follow your own devices. But, for Alizon's sake, stop in time."

"You now speak soberly and sensibly enough, Nicholas," replied Richard; "and I thank you heartily for your counsel, and if I do not follow it by withdrawing at once from a pursuit which may appear to you hopeless, if not dangerous, you will, I hope, give me credit for being actuated by worthy motives. I will at once, and frankly admit, that I love Alizon, and loving her you may rest assured I would sacrifice my life a thousand times rather than endanger her happiness. But there is a point in her history with which, if you were acquainted, it might alter your view of the case, but this is not the season for its disclosure, neither, I am bound to say, does the circumstance so materially alter the apparent posture of affairs as to remove all difficulty. On the contrary, it leaves an insurmountable obstacle behind it."

"Are you wise, then, in going on?" asked Nicholas.

"I know not," answered Richard, "but I feel as if I were the sport of fate. Uncertain whither to turn for the best, I leave the disposition of my course to chance. But alas!" he added, sadly, "all seems to point out that this meeting with Alizon will be my last."

"Well, cheer up, lad," said Nicholas. "These afflic-

tions are hard to bear, it is true; but somehow they are got over. Just as if your horse should fling you in the midst of a hedge when you are making a flying leap, you get scratched and bruised, but you scramble out, and in a day or two are on your legs again. Love breaks no bones, that's one comfort. When at your age I was desperately in love — not with Mistress Nicholas Assheton, Heaven help the fond soul! but with—never mind with whom—but it was not a very prudent match, and so, in my worldly wisdom, I was obliged to cry off. A sad business it was. I thought I should have died of it, and I made quite sure that the devoted girl would die first, in which case we were to occupy the same grave. But I was not driven to such a dire extremity, for before I had kept house a week, Jack Walker, the keeper of Downham, made his appearance in my room, and after telling me of the mischief done by a pair of otters in the Ribble, finding me in a very desponding state, ventured to inquire if I had heard the news. Expecting to hear of the death of the girl, I prepared myself for an outburst of grief, and resolved to give immediate directions for a double funeral, when he informed me—what do you think, Dick?—that she was going to be married to himself. I recovered at once, and immediately went out to hunt the otters, and rare sport we had.—But here comes Gregory with the famous old Rhenish. Better take a cup,

Dick. This is the best cure for the heartache, and for all other aches and grievances. Ah ! glorious stuff—miraculous wine," he added, smacking his lips with extraordinary satisfaction, after a deep draught, "those worthy fathers were excellent judges. I have a great reverence for them. But where can Alizon be all this while ? Supper is well nigh over, and the dancing and pastimes will commence anon, and yet she comes not."

"She is here," cried Richard.

And as he spoke Mistress Nutter and Alizon entered the hall.

Richard endeavoured to read in the young girl's countenance some intimation of what had passed between her and Mistress Nutter, but he only remarked that she was paler than before, and had traces of anxiety about her. Mistress Nutter also looked gloomy and thoughtful, and there was nothing in the manner or deportment of either to lead to the conclusion that a discovery of relationship between them had taken place. As Alizon moved on, her eyes met those of Richard—but the look was intercepted by Mistress Nutter, who instantly called off her daughter's attention to herself; and while the young man hesitated to join them, his sister came quickly up to him, and drew him away in another direction. Left to himself, Nicholas tossed off another cup of the miraculous Rhenish, which improved in flavour as he discussed it, and then placing a chair oppo-

site the portrait of Isole de Heton, filled a bumper, and uttering the name of the fair votaress, drained it to her. This time he was quite certain he received a significant glance in return, and no one being near to contradict him, he went on indulging the idea of an amorous understanding between himself and the picture, till he had finished the bottle, and obtained as many ogles as he swallowed draughts of wine, upon which he arose and staggered off in search of Dame Tetlow.

Meanwhile, Mistress Nutter having made her excuses to Lady Assheton for not attending the supper, walked down the hall with her daughter, until such time as the dancing and pastimes should commence. As will be readily supposed under the circumstances, this part of the entertainment was distasteful to both of them, but it could not be avoided without entering into explanations, which Mistress Nutter was unwilling to make, and she, therefore, counselled her daughter to act in all respects as if she were still Alizon Device, and in no way connected with her.

"I shall take an early opportunity of announcing my intention to adopt you," she said, "and then you can act differently. Meantime, keep near me as much as you can. Say little to Dorothy or Richard Assheton, and prepare to retire early, for this noisy and riotous assemblage is not much to my taste, and I care not how soon I quit it."

Alizon assented to what was said, and stole a timid glance towards Richard and Dorothy; but the latter,

who alone perceived it, instantly averted her head, in such way as to make it evident she wished to shun her regards. Slight as it was, this circumstance occasioned Alizon much pain, for she could not conceive how she had offended her new-made friend, and it was some relief to encounter a party of acquaintances who had risen from the lower table at her approach, though they did not presume to address her, while she was with Mistress Nutter, but waited respectfully at a little distance. Alizon, however, flew towards them.

"Ah, Susan!—ah, Nancy!" she cried, taking the hand of each—"how glad I am to see you here; and you too, Lawrence Blackrod—and you, Phil Rawson—and you, also, good Master Harrop. How happy you all look!"

"An wi' good reason, sweet Alizon," replied Blackrod. "Boh we began to be afeerd we'd lost ye, an that wad ha' bin a sore mishap—to lose our May Queen—an th' prottiest May Queen os ever dawnced i' this ha', or i' onny other ha' i' Lankyshiar."

"We ha drunk your health, sweet Alizon," added Phil—"an wishin' ye may be os happy os ye desarve, wi' the mon o' your heart, if onny sich lucky chap there be."

"Thank you—thank you both," replied Alizon, blushing; "and in return I cannot wish you better fortune, Philip, than to be united to the good girl near you, for I know her kindly disposition so well, that I am sure she will make you happy."

"Ey'm satisfied on't myself," replied Rawson; "an ey hope ere long she'll be missus o' a little cot i' Bowland Forest, an that yo'll pay us a visit, Alizon, an see an judge fo' yourself how happy we be. Nance win make a rare forester's wife."

"Not a bit better than my Sukey," cried Lawrence Blackrod. "Ye shanna get th' start o' me, Phil, fo' by th' mess! the very same day os sees yo wedded to Nancy Holt shan find me united to Sukey Worsley. An so Alizon win ha' two cottages i' Bowland Forest to visit i'stead o' one."

"And well pleased I shall be to visit them both," she rejoined.

At this moment Mistress Nutter came up.

"My good friends," she said, "as you appear to take so much interest in Alizon, you may be glad to learn that it is my intention to adopt her as a daughter, having no child of my own, and though her position henceforth will be very different from what it has been, I am sure she will never forget her old friends."

"Never, indeed, never!" cried Alizon, earnestly.

"This is good news, indeed," cried Sampson Harrop, joyfully, while the others joined in his exclamation. "We all rejoice in Alizon's good fortune, and think she richly deserves it. For my own part, I was always sure she would have rare luck, but I did not expect such luck as this."

"What's to become o' me?" cried Jennet, coming

from behind a chair, where she had hitherto concealed herself.

"I will always take care of you," replied Alizon, stooping, and kissing her.

"Do not promise more than you may be able to perform, Alizon," observed Mistress Nutter, coldly, and regarding the little girl with a look of disgust; "an ill-favour'd little creature, with the Demdike eyes."

"And as ill-tempered as she is ill-favoured," rejoined Sampson Harrop, "and though she cannot help being ugly, she might help being malicious."

Jennet gave him a bitter look.

"You do her injustice, Master Harrop," said Alizon. "Poor little Jennet is quick-tempered, but not malevolent."

"Ey con hate weel if ey conna love," replied Jennet, "an con recollect injuries if ey forget kindnesses.—Boh dunna trouble yourself about me, sister. Ey dunna envy ye your luck. Ey dunna want to be adopted by a grand dame. Ey'm content os ey am. Boh are na ye gettin' on rayther too fast, lass? Mother's consent has to be axed, ey suppose, efore ye leave her."

"There is little fear of her refusal," observed Mistress Nutter.

"Ey dunna knoa that," rejoined Jennet. "If she were to refuse, it wadna surprise me."

"Nothing spiteful she could do would surprise me," remarked Harrop. "But how are you likely to know

what your mother will think and do, you forward little hussey ?"

"Ey judge fro' circumstances," replied the little girl, "Mother has often said she conna weel spare Alizon. An mayhap Mistress Nutter may knoa, that she con be very obstinate when she tays a whim into her head."

"I *do* know it," replied Mistress Nutter; "and, from my experience of her temper in former days, I should be loath to have you near me, who seem to inherit her obstinacy."

"Wi' sich misgivings ey wonder ye wish to tak Alizon, madam," said Jennet, "fo' she's os much o' her mother about her os me, onny she dunna choose to show it."

"Peace, thou mischievous urchin," cried Mistress Nutter, losing all patience.

"Shall I take her away ?" said Harrop—seizing her hand.

"Ay, do," said Mistress Nutter.

"No, no, let her stay," cried Alizon, quickly, "I shall be miserable if she goes."

"Oh, ey'm quite ready to go," saidJennet, "fo ey care little fo sich seets os this—boh efore ey leave ey wad fain say a few words to Mester Potts whom ey see yonder."

"What can you want with him, Jennet?" cried Alizon, in surprise.

"Onny to tell him what brother Jem is gone to Pendle fo' to-neet," replied the little girl, with a significant and malicious look at Mistress Nutter.

"Ha!" muttered the lady. "There is more malice in this little wasp than I thought. But I must rob it of its sting."

And while thus communing with herself, she fixed a searching look on Jennet, and then raising her hand quickly, waved it in her face.

"Oh!" cried the little girl, falling suddenly backwards.

"What's the matter?" demanded Alizon, flying to her.

"Ey dunna reetly knoa," replied Jennet.

"She's seized with a sudden faintness," said Harrop. "Better she should go home then at once. I'll find somebody to take her."

"Neaw, neaw, ey'n sit down here," said Jennet, "ey shan be better soon."

"Come along, Alizon," said Mistress Nutter, apparently unconcerned at the circumstance.

Having confided the little girl, who was now recovered from the shock, to the care of Nancy Holt, Alizon followed her mother.

At this moment, Sir Ralph, who had quitted the supper-table, clapped his hands loudly, thus giving the signal to the minstrels, who having repaired to the gallery now struck up a merry tune, and instantly the whole hall was in motion. Snatching up his wand Sampson Harrop hurried after Alizon, beseeching her to return with him, and join a procession about to be formed by the revellers, and, of course, as May Queen, and

the most important personage in it, she could not refuse. Very short space sufficed the morris-dancers to find their partners; Robin Hood and the foresters got into their places; the hobby horse curvetted and capered; Friar Tuck resumed his drolleries; and even Jack Roby was so far recovered as to be able to get on his legs, though he could not walk very steadily. Marshalled by the gentleman-usher, and headed by Robin Hood and the May Queen, the procession marched round the hall, the minstrels playing merrily the while, and then drew up before the upper table, where a brief oration was pronounced by Sir Ralph. A shout that made the rafters ring again followed the address, after which a couranto was called for by the host, who taking Mistress Nicholas Assheton by the hand, led her into the body of the hall, whither he was speedily followed by the other guests who had found partners in like manner.

Before relating how the ball was opened a word must be bestowed upon Mistress Nicholas Assheton, whom I have neglected nearly as much as she was neglected by her unworthy spouse, and I therefore hasten to repair the injustice by declaring that she was a very amiable and very charming woman, and danced delightfully. And recollect, ladies, these were dancing days—I mean days when knowledge of figures as well as skill was required, more than twenty forgotten dances being in vogue, the very names of which may surprise you as I recapitulate them. There was the passamezzo,

a great favourite with Queen Elizabeth, who used to foot it merrily, when, as you are told by Gray—

> "The great Lord-keeper led the brawls,
> And seals and maces danced before him!"

the grave pavane, likewise a favourite with the Virgin Queen, and which I should like to see supersede the eternal polka at Almack's and elsewhere, and in which—

> "Five was the number of the music's feet
> Which still the dance did with five paces meet;"

the couranto, with its "current traverses," "sliding passages," and solemn tune, wherein, according to Sir John Davies,—

> —"that dancer greatest praise hath won
> Who with best order can all order shun;"

the lavolta, also delineated by the same knowing hand,—

> "Where arm in arm two dancers are entwined,
> And whirl themselves with strict embracements bound,
> And still their feet an anapest do sound."

Is not this very much like a waltz? Yes, ladies, you have been dancing the lavolta of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries without being aware of it. But there was another waltz still older, called the sauteuse, which I suspect answered to your favourite polka. Then there were brawls, galliards, paspys, sarabands, country-dances of various figures, cushion dances (another dance I long to see revived), kissing dances, and rounds, any of which are better than the objectionable

polka. Thus you will see that there was infinite variety at least at the period under consideration, and that you have rather retrograded than advanced in the saltatory art. But to return to the ball.

Mistress Nicholas Assheton, I have said, excelled in the graceful accomplishment of dancing, and that was probably the reason why she had been selected for the couranto by Sir Ralph, who knew the value of a good partner. By many persons she was accounted the handsomest woman in the room, and in dignity of carriage, she was certainly unrivalled. This was precisely what Sir Ralph required, and having executed a few "current traverses and sliding passages" with her, with a gravity and stateliness worthy of Sir Christopher Hatton himself, when graced by the hand of his sovereign mistress, he conducted her amid the hushed admiration of the beholders, to a seat. Still the dance continued with unabated spirit; all those engaged in it running up and down, or "turning and winding with unlooked-for change." Alizon's hand had been claimed by Richard Assheton, and next to the stately host and his dignified partner, they came in for the largest share of admiration and attention; and if the untutored girl fell short of the accomplished dame in precision and skill, she made up for the want of them, in natural grace and freedom of movement, for the display of which the couranto with its frequent and impromptu changes afforded ample opportunity. Even Sir Ralph was struck with her extreme gracefulness, and pointed her

out to Mistress Nicholas, who, unenvying and amiable, joined heartily in his praises. Overhearing what was said, Mistress Nutter thought it a fitting opportunity to announce her intention of adopting the young girl; and though Sir Ralph seemed a good deal surprised at the suddenness of the declaration, he raised no objection to the plan; but, on the contrary, applauded it. But another person, by no means disposed to regard it in an equally favourable light, became acquainted with the intelligence at the same time. This was Master Potts, who instantly set his wits at work to discover its import. Ever on the alert, his little eyes, sharp as needles, had detected Jennet amongst the rustic company, and he now made his way towards her, resolved, by dint of cross-questioning and otherwise, to extract all the information he possibly could from her.

The dance over, Richard and his partner wandered towards a more retired part of the hall.

"Why does your sister shun me?" inquired Alizon, with a look of great distress. "What can I have done to offend her? Whenever I regard her she averts her head, and as I approached her just now, she moved away, making it evident she designed to avoid me. If I could think myself in any way different from what I was this morning, when she treated me with such unbounded confidence and kindness, or accuse myself of any offence towards her, even in thought, I could understand it; but as it is, her pre-

sent coldness appears inexplicable and unreasonable, and gives me great pain. I would not forfeit her regard for worlds, and therefore beseech you to tell me what I have done amiss that I may endeavour to repair it."

"You have done nothing—nothing, whatever, sweet girl," replied Richard. "It is only caprice on Dorothy's part, and except that it distresses you, her conduct, which you justly call 'unreasonable,' does not deserve a moment's serious consideration."

"Oh, no, you cannot deceive me thus," cried Alizon. "She is too kind—too well-judging, to be capricious. Something must have occurred to make her change her opinion of me, though what it is I cannot conjecture. I have gained much to-day—more than I had any right to expect—but if I have forfeited the good opinion of your sister, the loss of her friendship will counterbalance all the rest."

"But you have not lost it, Alizon," replied Richard, earnestly. "Dorothy has got some strange notions into her head, which only require to be combated. She does not like Mistress Nutter, and is piqued and displeased by the extraordinary interest which that lady displays towards you. That is all."

"But why should she not like Mistress Nutter?" inquired Alizon.

"Nay, there is no accounting for fancies," returned Richard, with a faint smile. "I do not attempt to defend her, but simply offer the only excuse in my power for her conduct."

"I am concerned to hear it," said Alizon, sadly, "because henceforth I shall be so intimately connected with Mistress Nutter, that this estrangement, which I hoped arose only from some trivial cause, and merely required a little explanation to be set aside, may become widened and lasting. Owing every thing to Mistress Nutter, I must espouse her cause, and if your sister likes her not, she likes me not in consequence, and therefore we must continue divided. But surely her dislike is of very recent date, and cannot have any strong hold upon her; for, when she and Mistress Nutter met this morning, a very different feeling seemed to animate her."

"So, indeed, it did," replied Richard, visibly embarrassed and distressed. "And since you have made me acquainted with the new tie and interests you have formed, I can only regret alluding to the circumstance."

"That you may not misunderstand me," said Alizon, "I will explain the extent of my obligations to Mistress Nutter, and then you will perceive how much I am bounden to her. Childless herself, greatly interested in me, and feeling for my unfortunate situation, with infinite goodness of heart she has declared her intention of removing me from all chance of baneful influence, from the family with whom I have been heretofore connected, by adopting me as her daughter."

"I should indeed rejoice at this," said Richard, "were it not that——"

And he stopped, gazing anxiously at her.

"Were not what?" cried Alizon, alarmed by his looks. "What do you mean?"

"Do not press me further," he rejoined, "I cannot answer you. Indeed I have said too much already."

"You have said too much or too little," cried Alizon. "Speak, I implore you. What mean these dark hints which you throw out, and which like shadows elude all attempts to grasp them! Do not keep me in this state of suspense and agitation. Your looks speak more than your words. Oh, give your thoughts utterance!"

"I cannot," replied Richard. "I do not believe what I have heard, and, therefore, will not repeat it. It would only increase the mischief. But, oh! tell me this! Was it, indeed, to remove you from the baneful influence of Elizabeth Device that Mistress Nutter adopted you?"

"Other motives may have swayed her, and I have said they did so," replied Alizon; "but that wish, no doubt, had great weight with her. Nay, notwithstanding her abhorrence of the family, she has kindly consented to use her best endeavours to preserve little Jennet from further ill, as well as to reclaim poor misguided Elizabeth herself."

"Oh! what a weight you have taken from my heart," cried Richard, joyfully. "I will tell Dorothy what you say, and it will at once remove all her doubts and suspicions. She will now be the same to you as ever, and to Mistress Nutter."

"I will not ask you what those doubts and suspicions

were, since you so confidently promise me this, which is all I desire," replied Alizon, smiling; "but any unfavourable opinions entertained of Mistress Nutter are wholly undeserved. Poor lady! she has endured many severe trials and sufferings, and whenever you learn the whole of her history, she will, I am sure, have your sincere sympathy."

"You have certainly produced a complete revolution in my feelings towards her," said Richard, "and I shall not be easy till I have made a like convert of Dorothy."

At this moment a loud clapping of hands was heard, and Nicholas was seen marching towards the centre of the hall, preceded by the minstrels who had descended for the purpose from the gallery, and bearing in his arms a large red velvet cushion. As soon as the dancers had formed a wide circle round him, a very lively tune called "Joan Sanderson," from which the dance, about to be executed, sometimes received its name, was struck up, and the squire, after a few preliminary flourishes, set down the cushion, and gave chase to Dame Tetlow, who, threading her way rapidly through the ring, contrived to elude him. This chase, accompanied by music, excited shouts of laughter on all hands, and no one knew which most to admire, the eagerness of the squire, or the dexterity of the lissom dame in avoiding him.

Exhausted, at length, and baffled in his quest, Nicholas came to a halt before Tom the Piper, and, taking

up the cushion, thus preferred his complaint:—"This dance it can no further go—no further go."

Whereupon the piper chanted in reply,—"I pray you, good sir, why say you so,—why say you so?"

Amidst general laughter, the squire tenderly and touchingly responded—"Because Dame Tetlow will not come to,—will not come to."

Whereupon Tom the Piper, waxing furious, blew a shrill whistle, accompanied by an encouraging rattle of the tambourine, and enforcing the mandate by two or three energetic stamps on the floor, delivered himself in this fashion:—"She *must* come to, and she SHALL come to. And she must come, whether she will or no."

Upon this two of the prettiest female morris-dancers, taking each a hand of the blushing and over-heated Dame Tetlow, for she had found the chase rather warm work, led her forward; while the squire advancing, very gallantly placed the cushion upon the ground before her, and as she knelt down upon it, bestowed a smacking kiss upon her lips. This ceremony being performed amidst much tittering and flustering, accompanied by many knowing looks and some expressed wishes among the swains, who hoped that their turn might come next, Dame Tetlow arose, and the squire seizing her hand, they began to whisk round in a sort of jig, singing merrily as they danced—

"Prinkum prankum is a fine dance,
And we shall go dance it once again!
Once again,
And we shall go dance it once again!"

And they made good the words too, for on coming to a stop, Dame Tetlow snatched up the cushion, and ran in search of the squire, who retreating among the surrounding damsels, made sad havoc among them, scarcely leaving a pretty pair of lips unvisited. Oh Nicholas! Nicholas! I am thoroughly ashamed of you, and regret becoming your historian. You get me into an infinitude of scrapes. But there is a rod in pickle for you, sir, which shall be used with good effect presently. Tired of such an unprofitable quest, Dame Tetlow came to a sudden halt, addressed the piper as Nicholas had addressed him, and receiving a like answer, summoned the delinquent to come forward, but as he knelt down on the cushion, instead of receiving the anticipated salute, he got a sound box on the ears, the dame, actuated probably by some feeling of jealousy, taking advantage of the favourable opportunity afforded her of avenging herself. No one could refrain from laughing at this unexpected turn in affairs, and Nicholas, to do him justice, took it in excellent part, and laughed louder than the rest. Springing to his feet, he snatched the kiss denied him by the spirited dame, and led her to obtain some refreshment at the lower table, of which they both stood in need, while the cushion being appropriated by other couples, other boxes on the ear and kisses were interchanged, leading to an infinitude of merriment.

Long before this Master Potts had found his way to Jennet, and as he drew near, affecting to notice her for

the first time, he made some remarks upon her not looking very well.

"'Deed, an ey'm nah varry weel," replied the little girl, "boh ey knoa who ey han to thonk fo' my ailment."

"Your sister, most probably," suggested the attorney. "It must be very vexatious to see her so much noticed, and be yourself so much neglected—very vexatious, indeed—I quite feel for you."

"Ey dunna want your feelin'," replied Jennet, nettled by the remark; "boh it wasna my sister os made me ill."

"Who was it then, my little dear," said Potts.

"Dunna 'dear' me," retorted Jennet; "yo're too ceevil by half, os the lamb said to the wolf. Boh sin ye mun knoa, it wur Mistress Nutter."

"Aha! very good—I mean—very bad," cried Potts. "What did Mistress Nutter do to you, my little dear? Don't be afraid of telling me. If I can do any thing for you I shall be very happy. Speak out—and don't be afraid."

"Nay fo' shure, ey'm nah afeerd," returned Jennet. "Boh whot mays ye so inqueesitive? Ye want to get summat out'n me, ey con see that plain enough, an os ye stand there glenting at me wi' your sly little een, ye look loike an owd fox ready to snap up a chicken o' th' furst opportunity."

"Your comparison is not very flattering, Jennet," replied Potts; "but I pass it by for the sake of its cle-

verness. You are a sharp child, Jennet—a very sharp child. I remarked that from the first moment I saw you. But in regard to Mistress Nutter, she seems a very nice lady—and must be a very kind lady, since she has made up her mind to adopt your sister. Not that I am surprised at her determination, for really Alizon is so superior—so unlike——"

"Me, ye wad say," interrupted Jennet. "Dunna be efeerd to speak out, sir."

"No, no," replied Potts, "on the contrary, there's a very great likeness between you. I saw you were sisters at once. I don't know which is the cleverest or prettiest —but perhaps you are the sharpest. Yes, you are the sharpest, undoubtedly, Jennet. If I wished to adopt any one, which, unfortunately, I'm not in a condition to do, having only bachelors' chambers in Chancery Lane, it should be you. But I can put you in a way of making your fortune, Jennet, and that's the next best thing to adopting you. Indeed, it's much better in my case."

"May my fortune!" cried the little girl, pricking up her ears, "ey should loike to knoa how ye wad contrive that."

"I'll show you how, directly, Jennet," returned Potts. "Pay particular attention to what I say, and think it over carefully, when you are by yourself. You are quite aware that there is a great talk about witches in these parts; and, I may speak it without offence to you, your own family come under the charge. There is your grandmother Demdike, for instance, a notorious

witch—your mother, Dame Device, suspected—your brother James suspected."

"Weel, sir," cried Jennet, eyeing him, sharply, "What does all this suspicion tend to?"

"You shall hear, my little dear," returned Potts. "It would not surprise me, if every one of your family, including yourself, should be arrested, shut up in Lancaster Castle, and burnt for witches!"

"Alack a day! an this ye ca' makin my fortin," cried Jennet, derisively. "Much obleeged to ye, sir, boh ey'd leefer be without the luck."

"Listen to me," pursued Potts, chuckling, "and I will point out to you a way of escaping the general fate of your family—not merely of escaping it—but of acquiring a large reward. And that is by giving evidence against them—by telling all you know—you understand—eh!"

"Yeigh, ey think ey *do* onderstond," replied Jennet, sullenly. "An so this is your grand scheme, eh, sir?"

"This is my scheme, Jennet," said Potts, "and a notable scheme it is, my little lass. Think it over. You're an admissible and indeed a desirable witness; for our sagacious sovereign has expressly observed that 'bairns,' (I believe you call children 'bairns,' in Lancashire, Jennet; your uncouth dialect very much resembles the Scottish language, in which our learned monarch writes as well as speaks)—'bairns,' says he, 'or wives, or never so defamed persons may of our law serve for sufficient witnesses and proofs; for who but witches

can be proofs, and so witnesses of the doings of witches.'"

"Boh, ey am neaw witch, ey tell ye, mon," cried Jennet, angrily.

"But you're a witch's bairn, my little lassy," replied Potts, "and that's just as bad, and you'll grow up to be a witch in due time—that is if your career be not cut short. I'm sure you must have witnessed some strange things when you visited your grandmother at Malkin Tower—that, if I mistake not, is the name of her abode?—and a fearful and witch-like name it is,—you must have heard frequent mutterings and curses, spells, charms, and diabolical incantations—beheld strange and monstrous visions—listened to threats uttered against people who have afterwards perished unaccountably."

"Ey've heerd an seen nowt o't sort," replied Jennet; "boh ey' han heerd my mother threaten yo."

"Ah, indeed," cried Potts, forcing a laugh, but looking rather blank afterwards; "and how did she threaten me, Jennet, eh?—But no matter. Let that pass for the moment. As I was saying, you must have seen mysterious proceedings both at Malkin Tower and your own house. A black gentleman with a club-foot must visit you occasionally, and your mother must now and then—say once a week—take a fancy to riding on a broomstick. Are you quite sure you have never ridden on one your self, Jennet, and got whisked up the chimney without being aware of it? It's the common

witch conveyance, and said to be very expeditious and agreeable—but I can't vouch for it myself—ha! ha! Possibly—though you are rather young—but possibly, I say, you may have attended a witch's Sabbath, and seen a huge He-Goat, with four horns on his head, and a large tail, seated in the midst of a large circle of devoted admirers. If you have seen this, and can recollect the names and faces of the assembly, it would be highly important."

"When ey see it, ey shanna forget it," replied Jennet. "Boh ey am nah quite so familiar wi Owd Scrat os yo seem to suppose."

"Has it ever occurred to you that Alizon might be addicted to these practices?" pursued Potts, "and that she obtained her extraordinary and otherwise unaccountable beauty by some magical process—some charm —some diabolical unguent prepared, as the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seals, the singularly learned Lord Bacon, declares, from fat of unbaptised babes, compounded with henbane, hemlock, mandrake, moonshade, and other terrible ingredients. She could not be so beautiful without some such aid."

"That shows how little yo knoaw about it," replied Jennet. "Alizon is os good as she's protty, and dunna yo think to wheedle me into sayin' out agen her, fo' yo winna do it. Ey'd dee rayther than harm a hure o' her heaod."

"Very praiseworthy, indeed, my little dear," replied Potts, ironically. "I honour you for your sisterly

affection, but notwithstanding all this I cannot help thinking she has bewitched Mistress Nutter."

"Licker, Mistress Nutter has bewitched her," replied Jennet.

"Then you think Mistress Nutter is a witch, eh?" cried Potts, eagerly.

"Ey'st neaw tell ye what ey think, mon," rejoined Jennet, doggedly.

"But hear me," cried Potts, "I have my own suspicions, also, nay, more than suspicions."

"If ye're shure, yo dunna want me," said Jennet.

"But I want a witness," pursued Potts, "and if you'll serve as one—"

"Whot'll ye gi' me ?" said Jennet.

"Whatever you like," rejoined Potts. "Only name the sum. So you can prove the practice of witchcraft against Mistress Nutter—eh ?"

Jennet nodded. "Wad ye loike to knoa why brother Jem is gone to Pendle to neet?" she said.

"Very much indeed," replied Potts, drawing still nearer to her. "Very much indeed."

The little girl was about to speak, but on a sudden a sharp convulsion agitated her frame; her utterance totally failed her; and she fell back in the seat insensible.

Very much startled, Potts flew in search of some restorative, and on doing so, he perceived Mistress Nutter moving away from this part of the hall.

"She has done it," he cried. "A piece of witch-

craft before my very eyes. Has she killed the child? No; she breathes, and her pulse beats, though faintly. She is only in a swoon, but a deep and deathlike one. It would be useless to attempt to revive her; she must come to in her own way, or at the pleasure of the wicked woman who has thrown her into this condition. I have now an assured witness in this girl. But I must keep watch upon Mistress Nutter's further movements."

And he walked cautiously after her.

As Richard had anticipated, his explanation was perfectly satisfactory to Dorothy, and the young lady, who had suffered greatly from the restraint she had imposed upon herself, flew to Alizon, and poured forth excuses, which were as readily accepted as they were freely made. They were instantly as great friends as before, and their brief estrangement only seemed to make them dearer to each other. Dorothy could not forgive herself, and Alizon assured her there was nothing to be forgiven, and so they took hands upon it, and promised to forget all that had passed. Richard stood by, delighted with the change, and wrapped in the contemplation of the object of his love, who, thus engaged, seemed to him more beautiful than he had ever beheld her.

Towards the close of the evening, while all three were still together, Nicholas came up and took Richard aside. The squire looked flushed; and there was an undefined expression of alarm in his countenance.

"What is the matter?" inquired Richard, dreading to hear of some new calamity.

"Have you not noticed it, Dick?" said Nicholas, in a hollow tone. "The portrait is gone."

"What portrait?" exclaimed Richard, forgetting the previous circumstances.

"The portrait of Isole de Heton," returned Nicholas, becoming more sepulchral in his accents as he proceeded, "it has vanished from the wall. See and believe."

"Who has taken it down?" cried Richard, remarking that the picture had certainly disappeared.

"No mortal hand," replied Nicholas. "It has come down of itself. I knew what would happen, Dick. I told you the fair votaress gave me the *clin d'œil*—the wink. You would not believe me then—and now you see your mistake."

"I see nothing but the bare wall," said Richard.

"But you will see something anon, Dick," rejoined Nicholas, with a hollow laugh, and in a dismally deep tone. "You will see Isole herself. I was foolhardy enough to invite her to dance the brawl with me. She smiled her assent, and winked at me thus—very significantly I protest to you—and she will be as good as her word."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Richard.

"Absurd, sayest thou—thou art an infidel and believest nothing, Dick," cried Nicholas. "Dost thou not see that the picture is gone? She will be here

presently. Ha! the brawl is called for—the very dance I invited her to. She must be in the room now. I will go in search of her. Look out, Dick. Thou wilt behold a sight presently shall make thine hair stand on end."

And he moved away with a rapid but uncertain step.

"The potent wine has confused his brain," said Richard. "I must see that no mischance befalls him."

And waving his hand to his sister, he followed the squire, who moved on, staring inquisitively into the countenance of every pretty damsel he encountered.

Time had flown fleetly with Dorothy and Alizon, who, occupied with each other, had taken little note of its progress, and were surprised to find how quickly the hours had gone by. Meanwhile, several dances had been performed; a Morisco, in which all the May Day revellers took part, with the exception of the queen herself, who, notwithstanding the united entreaties of Robin Hood and her gentleman-usher, could not be prevailed upon to join it: a trenchmore, a sort of long country-dance, extending from top to bottom of the hall, and in which the whole of the rustics stood up: a galliard, confined to the more important guests, and in which both Alizon and Dorothy were included, the former dancing of course with Richard, and the latter with one of her cousins, young Joseph Robinson: and a jig, quite promiscuous and unexclusive, and not the less merry on that account. In this way, what with the dances,

which were of some duration, the trenchmore alone occupying more than hour, and the necessary breathing time between them, it was on the stroke of ten without any body being aware of it. Now this, though a very early hour for a modern party, being about the time when the first guest would arrive, was a very late one even in fashionable assemblages at the period in question, and the guests began to think of retiring, when the brawl intended to wind up the entertainment was called. The highest animation still prevailed throughout the company, for the generous host had taken care that the intervals between the dances should be well filled up with refreshments, and large bowls of spiced wines, with burnt oranges and crabs floating in them, were placed on the side-table and liberally dispensed to all applicants. Thus all seem destined to be brought to a happy conclusion.

Throughout the evening Alizon had been closely watched by Mistress Nutter, who remarked with feelings akin to jealousy and distrust, the marked predilection exhibited by her for Richard and Dorothy Assheton, as well as her inattention to her own expressed injunctions in remaining constantly near them. Though secretly displeased by this, she put a calm face upon it, and neither remonstrated by word or look. Thus Alizon feeling encouraged in the course she had adopted, and prompted by her inclinations, soon forgot the interdiction she had received. Mistress Nutter even went so far in her duplicity as to promise Dorothy

that Alizon should pay her an early visit at Middleton —though inwardly resolving no such visit should ever take place. However, she now received the proposal very graciously, and made Alizon quite happy in acceding to it.

"I would fain have her go back with me to Middleton when I return," said Dorothy, "but I fear you would not like to part with your newly-adopted daughter so soon; neither would it be quite fair to rob you of her. But I shall hold you to your promise of an early visit."

Mistress Nutter replied by a bland smile, and then observed to Alizon, that it was time for them to retire, and that she had stayed on her account far later than she intended—a mark of consideration duly appreciated by Alizon. Farewells for the night were then exchanged between the two girls, and Alizon looked round to bid adieu to Richard, but unfortunately at this very juncture he was engaged in pursuit of Nicholas. Before quitting the hall she made inquiries after Jennet, and receiving for answer that she was still in the hall, but had fallen asleep in a chair at one corner of the side-table, and could not be wakened, she instantly flew thither, and tried to rouse her, but in vain, when Mrs. Nutter coming up the next moment merely touched her brow and the little girl opened her eyes, and gazed about her with a bewildered look.

"She is unused to these late hours, poor child," said Alizon. "Some one must be found to take her home."

"You need not go far in search of a convoy," said Potts, who had been hovering about, and now stepped up; "I am going to the Dragon myself, and shall be happy to take charge of her."

"You are over-officious, sir," rejoined Mistress Nutter, coldly; "when we need your assistance we will ask it. My own servant, Simon Blackadder, will see her safely home."

And at a sign from her, a tall fellow, with a dark, scowling countenance, came from among the other serving-men, and, receiving his instructions from his mistress, seized Jennet's hand, and strode off with her. During all this time, Mistress Nutter kept her eyes steadily fixed on the little girl, who spoke not a word, nor replied even by a gesture to Alizon's affectionate good night, retaining her dazed look to the moment of quitting the hall.

"I never saw her thus before," said Alizon. "What can be the matter with her?"

"I think I could tell you," rejoined Potts, glancing maliciously and significantly at Mistress Nutter.

The lady darted an ireful and piercing look at him, which seemed to produce much the same consequences as those experienced by Jennet, for his visage instantly elongated, and he sank back in a chair.

"Oh, dear!" he cried, putting his hand to his head; "I'm struck all of a heap. I feel a sudden qualm—a giddiness—a sort of don't-know-howishness. Ho, there! some aqua-vitæ—or imperial water—or cinnamon water,

or whatever reviving cordial may be at hand. I feel very ill—very ill, indeed—oh dear!"

While his requirements were attended to, Mistress Nutter moved away with her daughter, but they had not proceeded far, when they encountered Richard, who, having fortunately descried them, came up to say good night.

The brawl, meanwhile, had commenced, and the dancers were whirling round giddily in every direction, somewhat like the couples in a grand polka, danced after a very boisterous, romping, and extravagant fashion.

"Who is Nicholas dancing with," asked Mistress Nutter, suddenly.

"Is he dancing with any one?" rejoined Richard, looking amidst the crowd.

"Do you not see her?" said Mistress Nutter; "a very beautiful woman with flashing eyes; they move so quickly, that I can scarce discern her features; but she is habited like a nun."

"Like a nun," cried Richard, his blood growing chill in his veins. "'Tis she indeed, then! Where is he?"

"Yonder, yonder, whirling madly round," replied Mistress Nutter.

"I see him now," said Richard, "but he is alone. He has lost his wits to dance in that strange manner by himself. How wild too is his gaze."

"I tell you he is dancing with a very beautiful woman in the habit of a nun," said Mistress Nutter. "Strange I should never have remarked her before.

No one in the room is to be compared with her in loveliness—not even Alizon. Her eyes seem to flash fire, and she bounds like the wild roe."

"Does she resemble the portrait of Isole de Heton?" asked Richard, shuddering.

"She does—she does," replied Mistress Nutter. "See! she whirls past us now."

"I can see no one but Nicholas," cried Richard.

"Nor I," added Alizon, who shared in the young man's alarm.

"Are you sure you behold that figure?" said Richard, drawing Mistress Nutter aside, and breathing the words in her ear. "If so it is a phantom—or he is in the power of the fiend. He was rash enough to invite that wicked votaress, Isole de Heton, condemned, it is said, to penal fires for her earthly enormities, to dance with him, and she has come."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mistress Nutter.

"She will whirl him round till he expires," cried Richard; "I must free him at all hazards."

"Stay," said Mistress Nutter; "it is I who have been deceived. Now I look again, I see that Nicholas is alone."

"But the nun's dress—the wondrous beauty—the flashing eyes!" cried Richard. "You described Isole exactly."

"It was mere fancy," said Mistress Nutter. "I had just been looking at her portrait, and it dwelt on my mind, and created the image."

"The portrait is gone," cried Richard, pointing to the empty wall.

Mistress Nutter looked confounded.

And without a word more, she took Alizon, who was full of alarm and astonishment, by the arm, and hurried her out of the hall.

As they disappeared, the young man flew towards Nicholas, whose extraordinary proceedings had excited general amazement. The other dancers had moved out of the way, so that free space was left for his mad gyrations. Greatly scandalised by the exhibition, which he looked upon as the effect of intoxication, Sir Ralph called loudly to him to stop, but he paid no attention to the summons, but whirled on with momently-increasing velocity, oversetting old Adam Whitworth, Gregory, and Dickon, who severally ventured to place themselves in his path, to enforce their master's injunctions, until at last just as Richard reached him, he uttered a loud cry, and fell to the ground insensible. By Sir Ralph's command he was instantly lifted up and transported to his own chamber.

This unexpected and extraordinary incident put an end to the ball, and the whole of the guests, after taking a respectful and grateful leave of the host, departed—not in "most admired" disorder, but full of wonder. By most persons the squire's "fantastical vagaries," as they were termed, were traced to the vast quantity of wine he had drunk, but a few others shook their heads, and said he was evidently bewitched, and that Mother Chattox and

Nance Redferne were at the bottom of it. As to the portrait of Isole de Heton, it was found under the table, and it was said, that Nicholas himself had pulled it down; but this he obstinately denied, when afterwards taken to task for his indecorous behaviour; and to his dying day he asserted, and believed, that he had danced the brawl with Isole de Heton. "And never," he would say, "had mortal man such a partner."

From that night the two portraits in the banqueting-hall were regarded with great awe by the inmates of the Abbey.

CHAPTER X.

THE NOCTURNAL MEETING.

On gaining the head of the staircase leading to the corridor, Mistress Nutter, whose movements had hitherto been extremely rapid, paused with her daughter to listen to the sounds arising from below. Suddenly was heard a loud cry, and the music, which had waxed fast and furious in order to keep pace with the frenzied boundings of the squire, ceased at once, showing some interruption had occurred, while from the confused noise that ensued, it was evident the sudden stoppage had been the result of accident. With blanched cheek Alizon listened, scarcely daring to look at her mother, whose expression of countenance, revealed by the lamp she held in her hand, almost frightened her; and it was a great relief to hear the voices and laughter of the serving-men as they came forth with Nicholas, and bore him towards another part of the mansion; and though much shocked, she was glad when one of them, who appeared to be Nicholas's own servant, assured the others "that it was

only a drunken fit, and that the squire would wake up next morning as if nothing had happened."

Apparently satisfied with this explanation, Mistress Nutter moved on; but a new feeling of uneasiness came over Alizon as she followed her down the long dusky corridor, in the direction of the mysterious chamber, where they were to pass the night. The fitful flame of the lamp fell upon many a grim painting depicting the sufferings of the early martyrs; and these ghastly representations did not serve to re-assure her. The grotesque carvings on the panels and ribs of the vaulted roof likewise impressed her with vague terror, and there was one large piece of sculpture—Saint Theodora subjected to diabolical temptation, as described in the Golden Legend,—that absolutely scared her. Their footsteps echoed hollowly overhead, and more than once, deceived by the sound, Alizon turned to see if any one was behind them. At the end of the corridor lay the room once occupied by the superior of the religious establishment, and still known from that circumstance as the "Abbot's Chamber." Connected with this apartment was the beautiful oratory built by Paslew, wherein he had kept his last vigils; and though now no longer applied to purposes of worship, still wearing from the character of its architecture, its sculptured ornaments, and the painted glass in its casements, a dim religious air. The Abbot's Room was allotted to Dorothy Assheton; and from its sombre magnificence, as well as the ghostly tales con-

nected with it, had impressed her with so much superstitious misgiving, that she besought Alizon to share her couch with her, but the young girl did not dare to assent. Just, however, as Mistress Nutter was about to enter her own room, Dorothy appeared on the corridor, and calling to Alizon to stay a moment, flew quickly towards her, and renewed the proposition. Alizon looked at her mother, but the latter decidedly, and somewhat sternly, negatived it.

The young girls then said good night, kissing each other affectionately, after which Alizon entered the room with Mistress Nutter, and the door was closed. Two tapers were burning on the dressing-table, and their light fell upon the carved figures of the wardrobe, which still exercised the same weird influence over her. Mistress Nutter neither seemed disposed to retire to rest immediately, nor willing to talk, but sat down, and was soon lost in thought. After awhile, an impulse of curiosity which she could not resist, prompted Alizon to peep into the closet, and pushing aside the tapestry partly drawn over the entrance, she held the lamp forward so as to throw its light into the little chamber. A mere glance was all she was allowed, but it sufficed to show her the large oak chest, though the monkish robe lately suspended above it, and which had particularly attracted her attention, was gone. Mistress Nutter had noticed the movement, and instantly and somewhat sharply recalled her.

As Alizon obeyed, a slight tap was heard at the door.

The young girl turned pale, for in her present frame of mind any little matter affected her. Nor were her apprehensions materially allayed by the entrance of Dorothy, who looking white as a sheet, said she did not dare to remain in her own room, having been terribly frightened, by seeing a monkish figure in mouldering white garments, exactly resembling one of the carved images on the wardrobe, issue from behind the hangings on the wall and glide into the oratory, and she entreated Mistress Nutter to let Alizon go back with her. The request was peremptorily refused, and the lady, ridiculing Dorothy for her fears, bade her return, but she still lingered. This relation filled Alizon with inexpressible alarm, for though she did not dare to allude to the disappearance of the monkish gown, she could not help connecting the circumstance with the ghostly figure seen by Dorothy.

Unable otherwise to get rid of the terrified intruder, whose presence was an evident restraint to her, Mistress Nutter, at length, consented to accompany her to her room, and convince her of the folly of her fears, by an examination of the oratory. Alizon went with them, her mother not choosing to leave her behind, and indeed she herself was most anxious to go.

The Abbot's chamber was large and gloomy, nearly twice the size of the room occupied by Mistress Nutter, but resembling it in many respects, as well as in the dusky hue of its hangings and furniture, most of which had been undisturbed since the days of Paslew. The

very bed, of carved oak, was that in which he hadslept, and his arms were still displayed upon it, and on the painted glass of the windows. As Alizon entered she looked round with apprehension, but nothing occurred to justify her uneasiness. Having raised the arras, from behind which Dorothy averred the figure had issued, and discovering nothing but a panel of oak; with a smile of incredulity, Mistress Nutter walked boldly towards the oratory, the two girls, hand in hand, following tremblingly after her; but no fearful object met their view. A dressing-table, with a large mirror upon it, occupied the spot where the altar had formerly stood; but, in spite of this, and of other furniture, the little place of prayer, as has previously been observed, retained much of its original character, and seemed more calculated to inspire sentiments of devotional awe than any other.

After remaining for a short time in the oratory, during which she pointed out the impossibility of any one being concealed there, Mistress Nutter assured Dorothy she might rest quite easy that nothing further would occur to alarm her, and recommending her to lose the sense of her fears as speedily as she could in sleep, took her departure with Alizon.

But the recommendation was of little avail. The poor girl's heart died within her, and all her former terrors returned, and with additional force. Sitting down she looked fixedly at the hangings till her eyes ached, and then covering her face with her hands, and scarcely

daring to breathe, she listened intently for the slightest sound. A rustle would have made her scream—but all was still as death, so profoundly quiet, that the very hush and silence became a new cause of disquietude, and longing for some cheerful sound to break it, she would have spoken aloud but from a fear of hearing her own voice. A book lay before her, and she essayed to read it, but in vain. She was ever glancing fearfully round—ever listening intently. This state could not endure for ever, and feeling a drowsiness steal over her she yielded to it, and at length dropped asleep in her chair. Her dreams, however, were influenced by her mental condition, and slumber was no refuge, as promised by Mrs. Nutter, from the hauntings of terror.

At last a jarring sound aroused her, and she found she had been awakened by the clock striking twelve. Her lamp required trimming and burnt dimly, but by its imperfect light she saw the arras move. This could be no fancy, for the next moment the hangings were raised, and a figure looked from behind them; and this time it was not the monk, but a female robed in white. A glimpse of the figure was all Dorothy caught, for it instantly retreated, and the tapestry fell back to its place against the wall.

Scared by this apparition, Dorothy rushed out of the room so hurriedly that she forgot to take her lamp, and made her way, she scarcely knew how, to the adjoining chamber. She did not tap at the door, but trying it and finding it unfastened, opened it

softly, and closed it after her, resolved if the occupants of the room were asleep not to disturb them, but to pass the night in a chair, the presence of some living beings beside her sufficing, in some degree, to dispel her terrors. The room was buried in darkness, the tapers being extinguished.

Advancing on tiptoe, she soon discovered a seat, when what was her surprise to find Alizon asleep within it. She was sure it was Alizon—for she had touched her hair and face, and she felt surprised that the contact had not awakened her. Still more surprised did she feel that the young girl had not retired to rest. Again she stepped forward in search of another chair, when a gleam of light suddenly shot from one side of the bed, and the tapestry, masking the entrance to the closet, was slowly drawn aside. From behind it, the next moment, appeared the same female figure, robed in white, that she had previously beheld in the Abbot's Chamber. The figure held a lamp in one hand, and a small box in the other, and, to her unspeakable horror, disclosed the livid and contorted countenance of Mistress Nutter.

Dreadful though undefined suspicions crossed her mind, and she feared, if discovered, she should be sacrificed to the fury of this strange and terrible woman. Luckily, where she stood, though Mistress Nutter was revealed to her, she herself was screened from view by the hangings of the bed, and looking around for a hiding-place, she observed that the mysterious wardrobe,

close behind her, was open, and without a moment's hesitation, she slipped into the covert and drew the door to, noiselessly. But her curiosity overmastered her fear, and firmly believing some magical rite was about to be performed, she sought for means of beholding it; nor was she long in discovering a small eylet-hole in the carving which commanded the room.

Unconscious of any other presence than that of Alizon, whose stupor appeared to occasion her no uneasiness, Mistress Nutter placed the lamp upon the table, made fast the door, and muttering some unintelligible words, unlocked the box. It contained two singularly-shaped glass vessels, the one filled with a bright sparkling liquid, and the other with a greenish-coloured unguent. Pouring forth a few drops of the liquid into a glass near her, Mistress Nutter swallowed them, and then, taking some of the unguent upon her hands, proceeded to anoint her face and neck with it, exclaiming, as she did so, "Emen hetan! Emen hetan!"—words that fixed themselves upon the listener's memory.

Wondering what would follow, Dorothy gazed on, when she suddenly lost sight of Mistress Nutter, and after looking for her as far as her range of vision, limited by the aperture, would extend, she became convinced that she had left the room. All remaining quiet, she ventured, after awhile, to quit her hiding-place, and flying to Alizon, tried to waken her, but in vain. The poor girl retained the same moveless attitude, and appeared plunged in a deathly stupor.

Much frightened, Dorothy resolved to alarm the house, but some fears of Mistress Nutter restrained her, and she crept towards the closet to see whether that dread lady could be there. All was perfectly still, and somewhat emboldened, she returned to the table, where the box, which was left open and its contents unguarded, attracted her attention.

What was the liquid in the phial? What could it do? These were questions she asked herself, and longing to try the effect, she ventured at last to pour forth a few drops and taste it. It was like a potent distillation, and she became instantly sensible of a strange bewildering excitement. Presently her brain reeled, and she laughed wildly. Never before had she felt so light and buoyant, and wings seemed scarcely wanting to enable her to fly. An idea occurred to her. The wondrous liquid might arouse Alizon. The experiment should be tried at once, and, dipping her finger in the phial, she touched the lips of the sleeper, who sighed deeply and opened her eyes. Another drop, and Alizon was on her feet, gazing at her in astonishment, and laughing wildly as herself.

Poor girls! how wild and strange they looked—and how unlike themselves!

"Whither are you going?" cried Alizon.

"To the moon! to the stars!—anywhere!" rejoined Dorothy, with a laugh of frantic glee.

"I will go with you," cried Alizon, echoing the laugh.

"Here and there!—here and there!" exclaimed Dorothy, taking her hand. "Emen hetan! Emen hetan!"

As the mystic words were uttered they started away. It seemed as if no impediments could stop them; how they crossed the closet, passed through a sliding panel into the Abbot's Room, entered the oratory, and from it descended, by a secret staircase, to the garden they knew not—but there they were, gliding swiftly along in the moonlight, like winged spirits. What took them towards the conventual church they could not say. But they were drawn thither, as the ship was irresistibly dragged towards the loadstone rock described in the Eastern legend. Nothing surprised them then, or they might have been struck by the dense vapour, enveloping the monastic ruins, and shrouding them from view; nor was it until they entered the desecrated fabric, that any consciousness of what was passing around returned to them.

Their ears were then assailed by a wild hubbub of discordant sounds, hootings and croakings as of owls and ravens, shrieks and jarring cries as of nightbirds, bellowings as of cattle, groans and dismal sounds, mixed with unearthly laughter. Undefined and extraordinary shapes, whether men or women, beings of this world or of another they could not tell, though they judged them the latter, flew past with wild whoops and piercing cries, flapping the air as if with great leathern bat-like wings, or bestriding black, monstrous, misshapen steeds. Fantastical and grotesque were these

objects, yet hideous and appalling. Now and then a red and fiery star would whiz crackling through the air, and then exploding break into numerous pale phosphoric lights, that danced awhile overhead, and then flitted away among the ruins. The ground seemed to heave and tremble beneath the footsteps, as if the graves were opening to give forth their dead, while toads and hissing reptiles crept forth.

Appalled, yet partly restored to herself by this confused and horrible din, Alizon stood still and kept fast hold of Dorothy, who, seemingly under a stronger influence than herself, was drawn towards the eastern end of the fane, where a fire appeared to be blazing, a strong ruddy glare being cast upon the broken roof of the choir, and the mouldering arches around it. The noises around them suddenly ceased, and all the uproar seemed concentred near the spot where the fire was burning. Dorothy besought her friend so earnestly to let her see what was going forward, that Alizon reluctantly and tremblingly assented, and they moved slowly towards the transept, taking care to keep under the shelter of the columns.

On reaching the last pillar, behind which they remained, an extraordinary and fearful spectacle burst upon them. As they had supposed, a large fire was burning in the midst of the choir, the smoke of which ascending in eddying wreaths, formed a dark canopy overhead, where it was mixed with the steam issuing from a large black bubbling cauldron set on the

blazing embers. Around the fire were ranged, in a wide circle, an assemblage of men and women, but chiefly the latter, and of these almost all old, hideous, and of malignant aspect, their grim and sinister features looking ghastly in the lurid light. Above them, amid the smoke and steam, wheeled bat and flittermouse, horned owl and screech-owl, in mazy circles. The weird assemblage chattered together in some wild jargon, mumbling and muttering spells and incantations, chanting fearfully with hoarse, cracked voices a wild chorus, and anon breaking into a loud and long-continued peal of laughter. Then there was more mumbling, chattering, and singing, and one of the troop producing a wallet, hobbled forward.

She was a fearful old crone; hunchbacked, toothless, blear-eyed, bearded, halt, with huge gouty feet swathed in flannel. As she cast in the ingredients one by one, she chanted thus:

> "Head of monkey, brain of cat,
> Eye of weasel, tail of rat,
> Juice of mugwort, mastic, myrrh—
> All within the pot I stir."

"Well sung, Mother Mouldheels," cried a little old man, whose doublet and hose were of rusty black, with a short cloak, of the same hue, over his shoulders. "Well sung, Mother Mouldheels," he cried, advancing as the old witch retired, amidst a roar of laughter from the others, and chanting as he filled the cauldron:

> "Here is foam from a mad dog's lips,
> Gathered beneath the moon's eclipse,

Ashes of a shroud consumed,
And with deadly vapour fumed.
These within the mess I cast—
Stir the cauldron—stir it fast!"

A red-haired witch then took his place, singing,

"Here are snakes from out the river,
Bones of toad and sea-calf's liver;
Swine's flesh fattened on her brood,
Wolf's tooth, hare's foot, weasel's blood.
Skull of ape and fierce baboon,
And panther spotted like the moon;
Feathers of the horned owl,
Daw, pie, and other fatal fowl.
Fruit from fig-tree never sown,
Seed from cypress never grown.
All within the mess I cast,
Stir the cauldron—stir it fast!"

Nance Redferne then advanced, and taking from her wallet a small clay image, tricked out in attire intended to resemble that of James Device, plunged several pins deeply into its breast, singing as she did so, thus,—

"In his likeness it is moulded,
In his vestments 'tis enfolded.
Ye may know it, as I show it!
In its breast sharp pins I stick,
And I drive them to the quick.
They are in—they are in—
And the wretch's pangs begin.
Now his heart,
Feels the smart;
Through his marrow,
Sharp as arrow,
Torments quiver
He shall shiver,

He shall burn,
He shall toss, and he shall turn.
Unavailingly.
Aches shall rack him,
Cramps attack him ;
He shall wail,
Strength shall fail,
Till he die
Miserably !"

As Nance retired, another witch advanced, and sung thus:

" Over mountain, over valley, over woodland, over waste,
On our gallant broomsticks riding we have come with frantic haste,
And the reason of our coming, as ye wot well, is to see
Who this night, as new-made witch, to our ranks shall added be."

A wild burst of laughter followed this address, and another wizard succeeded, chanting thus:

" Beat the water, Demdike's daughter!
Till the tempest gather o'er us ;
Till the thunder strike with wonder
And the lightnings flash before us!
Beat the water, Demdike's daughter !
Ruin seize our foes and slaughter !"

As the words were uttered, a woman stepped from out the circle, and throwing back the gray-hooded cloak in which she was enveloped, disclosed the features of Elizabeth Device. Her presence in that fearful assemblage occasioned no surprise to Alizon, though it increased her horror. A pail of water was next set before

the witch, and a broom being placed in her hand, she struck the lymph with it, sprinkling it aloft, and uttering this spell:

"Mount, water, to the skies!
Bid the sudden storm arise.
Bid the pitchy clouds advance,
Bid the forked lightnings glance,
Bid the angry thunder growl,
Bid the wild wind fiercely howl!
Bid the tempest come amain,
Thunder, lightning, wind, and rain!"

As she concluded, clouds gathered thickly overhead, obscuring the stars that had hitherto shone down from the heavens. The wind suddenly arose, but in lieu of dispersing the vapours it seemed only to condense them. A flash of forked lightning cut through the air, and a loud peal of thunder rolled overhead.

Then the whole troop sang together—

"Beat the water, Demdike's daughter!
See the tempest gathers o'er us,
Lightning flashes—thunder crashes,
Wild winds sing in lusty chorus!"

For a brief space the storm raged fearfully, and recalled the terror of that previously witnessed by Alizon, which she now began to think might have originated in a similar manner. The wind raved around the ruined pile, but its breath was not felt within it, and the rain was heard descending in deluging showers without, though no drop came through the open roof. The thunder shook the walls and pillars of the old

fabric, and threatened to topple them down from their foundations, but they resisted the shocks. The lightning played around the tall spire springing from this part of the fane, and ran down from its shattered summit to its base, without doing any damage. The red bolts struck the ground innocuously, though they fell at the very feet of the weird assemblage, who laughed wildly at the awful tumult.

Whilst the storm was at its worst, while the lightning was flashing fiercely, and the thunder rattling loudly, Mother Chattox, with a chafing-dish in her hand, advanced towards the fire, and placing the pan upon it, threw certain herbs and roots into it, chanting thus :—

"Here is juice of poppy bruised,
With black hellebore infused;
Hereis mandrake's bleeding root,
Mixed with moonshade's deadly fruit;
Viper's bag with venom filled,
Taken ere the beast was killed;
Adder's skin and raven's feather,
With shell of beetle blent together;
Dragonwort and barbatus,
Hemlock black and poisonous;
Horn of hart, and storax red,
Lapwing's blood, at midnight shed.
In the heated pan they burn,
And to pungent vapours turn.
By this strong suffumigation,
By this potent invocation,
Spirits! I compel you here!
All who list my call appear!"

After a moment's pause, she resumed as follows:—

"White-robed brethren, who of old,
Nightly paced yon cloisters cold,
Sleeping now beneath the mould!
I bid ye rise.

"Abbots! by the weakling feared,
By the credulous revered,
Who this mighty fabric reared!
I bid ye rise!

"And thou last and guilty one!
By thy lust of power undone,
Whom in death thy fellows shun!
I bid thee come!

"And thou fair one, who disdained
To keep the vows thy lips had feigned;
And thy snowy garments stained!
I bid thee come!"

During this invocation, the glee of the assemblage ceased, and they looked around in hushed expectation of the result. Slowly then did a long procession of monkish forms, robed in white, glide along the aisles, and gather round the altar. The brass-covered stones within the presbytery were lifted up, as if they moved on hinges, and from the yawning graves beneath them arose solemn shapes, sixteen in number, each with mitre on head and crosier in hand, which likewise proceeded to the altar. Then a loud cry was heard, and from a side chapel burst the monkish form, in mouldering garments, which Dorothy had seen enter the oratory, and which would have mingled with its brethren at the altar, but they waved it off menacingly. Another

piercing shriek followed, and a female shape, habited like a nun, and of surpassing loveliness, issued from the opposite chapel, and hovered near the fire. Content with this proof of her power, Mother Chattox waved her hand, and the long shadowy train glided off as they came. The ghostly abbots returned to their tombs, and the stones closed over them. But the shades of Paslew and Isole de Heton still lingered.

The storm had well nigh ceased, the thunder rolled hollowly at intervals, and a flash of lightning now and then licked the walls. The weird crew had resumed their rites, when the door of the Lacy Chapel flew open, and a tall female figure came forward.

Alizon doubted if she beheld aright. Could that terrific woman in the strangely-fashioned robe of white, girt by a brazen zone graven with mystic characters, with a long glittering blade in her hand, infernal fury in her wildly-rolling orbs, the livid hue of death on her cheeks, and the red brand upon her brow —could that fearful woman, with the black dishevelled tresses floating over her bare shoulders, and whose gestures were so imperious, be Mistress Nutter? Mother no longer, if it indeed were she! How came she there amid that weird assemblage? Why did they so humbly salute her, and fall prostrate before her, kissing the hem of her garment? Why did she stand proudly in the midst of them, and extend her hand, armed with the knife, over them? Was she their sovereign mistress,

that they bent so lowly at her coming, and rose so reverentially at her bidding? Was this terrible woman, now seated on a dilapidated tomb, and regarding the dark conclave with the eye of a queen who held their lives in her hands—was she her mother? Oh, no!—no!—it could not be! It must be some fiend, that usurped her likeness.

Still, though Alizon thus strove to discredit the evidence of her senses, and to hold all she saw to be delusion, and the work of darkness, she could not entirely convince herself, but imperfectly recalling the fearful vision she had witnessed during her former stupor, began to connect it with the scene now passing before her. The storm had wholly ceased, and the stars again twinkled down through the shattered roof. Deep silence prevailed, broken only by the hissing and bubbling of the cauldron.

Alizon's gaze was rivetted upon her mother, whose slightest gestures she watched. After numbering the assemblage thrice, Mistress Nutter majestically arose, and motioning Mother Chattox towards her, the old witch tremblingly advanced, and some words passed between them, the import of which did not reach the listener's ear. In conclusion, however, Mistress Nutter exclaimed aloud, in accents of command—"Go, bring it at once, the sacrifice must be made."—And on this, Mother Chattox hobbled off to one of the side chapels.

A mortal terror seized Alizon, and she could scarcely

draw breath. Dark tales had been told her that unbaptised infants were sometimes sacrificed by witches, and their flesh boiled and devoured at their impious banquets, and dreading lest some such atrocity was now about to be practised, she mustered all her resolution, determined, at any risk, to interfere, and, if possible, prevent its accomplishment.

In another moment, Mother Chattox returned, bearing some living thing, wrapped in a white cloth, which struggled feebly for liberation, apparently confirming Alizon's suspicions, and she was about to rush forward, when Mistress Nutter, snatching the bundle from the old witch, opened it, and disclosed a beautiful bird, with plumage white as driven snow, whose legs were tied together, so that it could not escape. Conjecturing what was to follow, Alizon averted her eyes, and when she looked round again the bird had been slain, while Mother Chattox was in the act of throwing its body into the cauldron, muttering a charm as she did so. Mistress Nutter held the ensanguined knife aloft, and casting some ruddy drops upon the glowing embers, pronounced, as they hissed and smoked, the following adjuration:

> "Thy aid I seek, infernal Power!
> Be thy Word sent to Malkin Tower,
> That the beldame old may know
> Where I will, thoudst have her go—
> What I will, thoudst have her do!"

An immediate response was made by an awful voice issuing apparently from the bowels of the earth.

"Thou who seek'st the Demon's aid,
Know'st the price that must be paid."

The queen witch rejoined—

"I do. But grant the aid I crave,
And that thou wishest thou shalt have.
Another worshipper is won,
Thine to be, when all is done."

Again the deep voice spake, with something of mockery in its accents :—

"Enough, proud witch, I am content. .
To Malkin Tower the Word is sent.
Forth to her task the beldame goes,
And where she points the streamlet flows ;
Its customary bed forsaking,
Another distant channel making.
Round about like elfets tripping,
Stock and stone, and tree, are skipping ;
Halting where she plants her staff,
With a wild exulting laugh.
Ho! ho! 'tis a merry sight,
Thou hast given the hag to-night.

Lo! the sheep-fold, and the herd,
To another site are stirr'd!
And the rugged lime-stone quarry,
Where 'twas digg'd, may no more tarry ;
While the goblin-haunted dingle,
With another dell must mingle.
Pendle Moor is in commotion,
Like the billows of the ocean,
When the winds are o'er it ranging,
Heaving, falling, bursting, changing.
Ho! ho! 'tis a merry sight
Thou hast given the hag to-night.

Lo! the moss-pool sudden flies,
In another spot to rise ;

And the scanty-grown plantation,
Finds another situation,
And a more congenial soil,
Without needing woodman's toil.
Now the warren moves—and see!
How the burrowing rabbits flee,
Hither, thither till they find it,
With another brake behind it,
  Ho! ho! 'tis a merry sight
  Thou hast given the hag to-night.

Lo! new lines the witch is tracing,
Every well-known mark effacing,
Elsewhere, other bounds erecting,
So the old there's no detecting.
  Ho! ho! 'tis a pastime quite,
  Thou hast given the hag to-night!

The hind, at eve, who wandered o'er
The dreary waste of Pendle Moor,
Shall wake at dawn, and in surprise,
Doubt the strange sight that meets his eyes.
The pathway leading to his hut
Winds differently,—the gate is shut;
The ruin on the right that stood,
Lies on the left, and nigh the wood;
The paddock fenced with wall of stone,
Well-stocked with kine, a mile hath flown,
The sheepfold and the herd are gone.
Through channels new the brooklet rushes,
Its ancient course concealed by bushes.
Where the hollow was, a mound
Rises from the upheaved ground.
Doubting, shouting with surprise,
How the fool stares, and rubs his eyes!
All's so changed, the simple elf
Fancies he is changed himself!

Ho! ho! 'tis a merry sight
The bag shall have when dawns the light.
But see! she halts and waves her hand,
All is done as thou hast plann'd."

After a moment's pause the voice added,

"I have done as thou hast will'd—
Now be thy part straight fulfilled."

"It shall be," replied Mistress Nutter, whose features gleamed with fierce exultation. "Bring forth the proselyte!" she shouted.

And at the words, her swarthy serving-man, Blackadder, came forth from the Lacy chapel, leading Jennet by the hand. They were followed by Tib, who dilated to twice his former size, walked with tail erect, and eyes glowing like carbuncles.

At sight of her daughter a loud cry of rage and astonishment burst from Elizabeth Device, and rushing forward, she would have seized her, if Tib had not kept her off by a formidable display of teeth and talons. Jennet made no effort to join her mother, but regarded her with a malicious and triumphant grin.

"This is my chilt," screamed Elizabeth. "She canna be baptised without my consent, an ey refuse it. Ey dunna want her to be a witch—at least not yet awhile. What mays yo here, yo little plague?"

"Ey wur brought here, mother," replied Jennet, with affected simplicity.

"Then get whoam at once, and keep there," rejoined Elizabeth, furiously.

"Nay, eyst nah go just yet," replied Jennet. "Ey'd fain be a witch as weel as yo."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the voice from below.

"Nah, nah—ey forbid it," shrieked Elizabeth, "ye shanna be bapteesed. Whoy ha ye brought her here, madam?" she added, to Mistress Nutter. "Yo ha' stolen her fro' me. Boh ey protest agen it."

"Your consent is not required," replied Mistress Nutter, waving her off. "Your daughter is anxious to become a witch. That is enough."

"She is not owd enough to act for herself," said Elizabeth.

"Age matters not," replied Mistress Nutter.

"What mun ey do to become a witch?" asked Jennet.

"You must renounce all hopes of Heaven," replied Mistress Nutter, "and devote yourself to Satan. You will then be baptised in his name, and become one of his worshippers. You will have power to afflict all persons with bodily ailments—to destroy cattle—blight corn—burn dwellings—and, if you be so minded, kill those you hate, or who molest you. Do you desire to do all this?"

"Eigh, that ey do," replied Jennet. "Ey ha' more pleasure in evil than in good, an wad raythe see folk weep than laugh; an if ey had the power, ey wad so punish them os jeer at me, that they should rue it to their deein' day."

"All this you shall do, and more," rejoined Mistress

Nutter. "You renounce all hopes of salvation, then, and devote yourself, soul and body, to the Powers of Darkness."

Elizabeth, who was still kept at bay by Tib, shaking her arms, and gnashing her teeth, in impotent rage, now groaned aloud; but ere Jennet could answer, a piercing cry was heard, which thrilled through Mistress Nutter's bosom, and Alizon, rushing from her place of concealment, passed through the weird circle, and stood beside the group in the midst of it.

"Forbear, Jennet," she cried; "forbear! Pronounce not those impious words, or you are lost for ever. Come with me, and I will save you."

"Sister Alizon," cried Jennet, staring at her, in surprise, "what makes you here?"

"Do not ask—but come," cried Alizon, trying to take her hand.

"Oh! what is this?" cried Mistress Nutter, now partly recovered from the consternation and astonishment into which she had been thrown by Alizon's unexpected appearance. "Why are you here? How have you broken the chains of slumber in which I bound you? Fly—fly—at once, this girl is past your help. You cannot save her. She is already devoted. Fly. I am powerless to protect you here."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the voice.

"Do you not hear that laughter?" cried Mistress Nutter, with a haggard look. "Go!"

"Never, without Jennet," replied Alizon, firmly.

"My child—my child—on my knees I implore you to depart," cried Mistress Nutter, throwing herself before her—"You know not your danger—oh, fly—fly!"

But Alizon continued inflexible.

"Yo are caught i' your own snare, madam," cried Elizabeth Device, with a taunting laugh. "Sin Jennet mun be a witch, Alizon con be bapteesed os weel. Your consent is not required—and age matters not—ha! ha!"

"Curses upon thy malice," cried Mistress Nutter, rising. "What can be done in this extremity?"

"Nothing," replied the voice. "Jennet is mine already. If not brought hither by thee, or by her mother, she would have come of her own accord. I have watched her, and marked her for my own. Besides, she is fated. The curse of Paslew clings to her."

As the words were uttered, the shade of the abbot glided forwards, and touching the shuddering child upon the brow with its finger, vanished with a lamentable cry.

"Kneel, Jennet," cried Alizon, "kneel and pray!"

"To me," rejoined the voice, "she can bend to no other power. Alice Nutter, thou hast sought to deceive me, but in vain. I bade thee bring thy daughter here, and in place of her thou offerest me the child of another, who is mine already. I am not to be thus trifled with. Thou knowest my will. Sprinkle water over her head, and devote her to me."

Alizon would fain have thrown herself on her knees, but extremity of horror, or some overmastering influence held her fast; and she remained with her gaze fixed upon her mother, who seemed torn by conflicting emotions.

"Is there no way to avoid this?" cried Mistress Nutter.

"No way but one," replied the voice. "I have been offered a new devotee, and I claim fulfilment of the promise. Thy daughter or another, it matters not—but not Jennet."

"I embrace the alternative," cried Mistress Nutter.

"It must be done upon the instant," said the voice.

"It shall be," replied Mistress Nutter. And stretching her arm in the direction of the mansion, she called in a loud imperious voice, "Dorothy Assheton, come hither!"

A minute elapsed, but no one appeared, and with a look of disappointment, Mistress Nutter repeated the gesture and the words.

Still no one came.

"Baffled!" she exclaimed, "what can it mean?"

"There is a maiden within the south transept, who is not one of my servants," cried the voice. "Call her."

"'Tis she!" cried Mistress Nutter, stretching her arm towards the transept. "This time I am answered," she added, as with a wild laugh, Dorothy obeyed the summons.

"I have anointed myself with the unguent, and drank of the potion, ha! ha! ha!" cried Dorothy, with a wild gesture, and wilder laughter.

"Ha! this accounts for her presence here," muttered Mistress Nutter. "But it could not be better. She is in no mood to offer resistance. Dorothy, thou shalt be a witch."

"A witch!" exclaimed the bewildered maiden. "Is Alizon a witch?"

"We are all witches here," replied Mistress Nutter.

Alizon had no power to contradict her.

"A merry company!" exclaimed Dorothy, laughing loudly.

"You will say so anon," replied Mistress Nutter, waving her hand over her, and muttering a spell; "but you see them not in their true forms, Dorothy. Look again—what do you behold now?"

"In place of a troop of old wrinkled crônes in wretched habiliments," replied Dorothy, "I behold a band of lovely nymphs in light gauzy attire, wreathed with flowers, and holding myrtle and olive branches in their hands. See they rise, and prepare for the dance. Strains of ravishing music salute the ear. I never heard sounds so sweet and stirring. The round is formed. The dance begins. How gracefully—how lightly they move—ha! ha!"

Alizon could not check her—could not undeceive her—for power of speech as of movement was denied her, but she comprehended the strange delusion under

which the poor girl laboured. The figures Dorothy described as young and lovely were still to her the same loathsome and abhorrent witches; the ravishing music jarred discordantly on her ear, as if produced by a shrill cornemuse; and the lightsome dance was a fantastic round performed with shouts and laughter by the whole unhallowed crew.

Jennet laughed immoderately, and seemed delighted by the antics of the troop.

"Ey never wished to dance efore," she cried, "boh ey should like to try now."

"Join them, then," said Mistress Nutter.

And to the little girl's infinite delight a place was made for her in the round, and taking hands with Mother Mouldheels and the red-haired witch, she footed it as merrily as the rest.

"Who is she in the nunlike habit?" inquired Dorothy, pointing to the shade of Isole de Heton, which still hovered near the weird assemblage. "She seems more beautiful than all the others. Will she not dance with me?"

"Heed her not," said Mistress Nutter.

Dorothy, however, would not be gainsaid, but spite of the caution, beckoned the figure towards her. It came at once, and in another instant its arms were enlaced around her. The same frenzy that had seized Nicholas now took possession of Dorothy, and her dance with Isole might have come to a similar conclusion, if it had not been abruptly checked by Mis-

tress Nutter, who, waving her hand, and pronouncing a spell, the figure instantly quitted Dorothy, and with a wild shriek, fled.

"How like you these diversions?" said Mistress Nutter, to the panting and almost breathless maiden.

"Marvellously," replied Dorothy, "but why have you scared my partner away?"

"Because she would have done you a mischief," rejoined Mistress Nutter. "But now let me put a question to you. Are you willing to renounce your baptism, and enter into a covenant with the Prince of Darkness?"

Dorothy did not seem in the least to comprehend what was said to her; but she, nevertheless, replied "I am."

"Bring water and salt," said Mistress Nutter to Mother Chattox. "By these drops I baptise you," she added, dipping her fingers in the liquid, and preparing to sprinkle it over the brow of the proselyte.

Then it was that Alizon by an almost superhuman effort burst the spell that bound her, and clasped Dorothy in her arms.

"You know not what you do, dear Dorothy," she cried. "I answer for you. You will not yield to the snares and temptations of Satan, however subtly devised. You defy him and all his works. You will make no covenant with him. Though surrounded by his bond-slaves you fear him not. Is it not so? Speak!"

But Dorothy could only answer with an insane laugh —"I will be a witch."

"It is too late," interposed Mistress Nutter. "You cannot save her. And remember! she stands in your place. Or you or she must be devoted."

"I will never desert her," cried Alizon, twining her arms round her. "Dorothy—dear Dorothy—address yourself to Heaven."

An angry growl of thunder was heard.

"Beware!" cried Mistress Nutter.

"I am not to be discouraged," rejoined Alizon, firmly. "You cannot gain a victory over a soul in this condition, and I shall effect her deliverance. Heaven will aid us, Dorothy."

A louder roll of thunder was heard, followed by a forked flash of lightning.

"Provoke not the vengeance of the Prince of Darkness," said Mistress Nutter.

"I have no fear," replied Alizon. "Cling to me, Dorothy. No harm shall befall you."

"Be speedy," cried the voice.

"Let her go," cried Mrs. Nutter to Alizon, "or you will rue this disobedience. Why should you interfere with my projects, and bring ruin on yourself! I would save you. What, still obstinate. Nay, then, I will no longer show forbearance. Help me, sisters. Force the new witch from her. But beware how you harm my child."

At these words the troop gathered round the two girls. But Alizon only clasped her hands more tightly round Dorothy; while the latter, on whose brain the maddening potion still worked, laughed frantically at them. It was at this moment, that Elizabeth Device, who had conceived a project of revenge, put it into execution. While near Dorothy, she stamped, spat on the ground, and then cast a little mould over her, breathing in her ear, "Thou art bewitched—bewitched by Alizon Device."

Dorothy instantly struggled to free herself from Alizon.

"Oh! do not you strive against me, dear Dorothy," cried Alizon. "Remain with me, or you are lost."

"Hence! off! set me free!" shrieked Dorothy, "you have bewitched me. I heard it this moment."

"Do not believe the false suggestion," cried Alizon.

"It is true," exclaimed all the other witches together. "Alizon has bewitched you—and will kill you. Shake her off, shake her off!"

"Away!" cried Dorothy, mustering all her force. "Away!"

But Alizon was still too strong for her, and, in spite of her efforts at liberation, detained her.

"My patience is well nigh exhausted," exclaimed the voice.

"Alizon!" cried Mistress Nutter, imploringly.

And again the witches gathered furiously round the two girls.

"Kneel, Dorothy, kneel!" whispered Alizon. And forcing her down, she fell on her knees beside her, exclaiming with uplifted hands "Gracious heaven! deliver us."

As the words were uttered a fearful cry was heard, and the weird troop fled away screaming, like ill-omened birds. The cauldron sank into the ground; the dense mist arose like a curtain; and the moon and stars shone brightly down upon the ruined pile.

Alizon prayed long and fervently, with clasped hands and closed eyes, for deliverance from evil. When she looked round again all was so calm, so beautiful, so holy in its rest, that she could scarcely believe in the recent fearful occurrences. Her hair and garments were damp with the dews of night; and at her feet lay Dorothy, insensible.

She tried to raise her—to revive her, but in vain; when at this moment footsteps were heard approaching, and the next moment, Mistress Nutter, accompanied by Adam Whitworth, and some other serving-men entered the choir.

"I see them—they are here!" cried the lady, rushing forward.

"Heaven be praised, you have found them, madam!" exclaimed the old steward, coming quickly after her.

"Oh! what an alarm you have given me, Alizon," said Mistress Nutter. "What could induce you to go forth secretly at night in this way with Dorothy! I dreamed you were here, and missing you when I

awoke, roused the house, and came in search of you. What is the matter with Dorothy? She has been frightened, I suppose. I will give her to breathe at this phial. It will revive her. See, she opens her eyes."

Dorothy looked round wildly for a moment, and then, pointing her finger at Alizon, said

"She has bewitched me."

"Poor thing! she rambles," observed Mistress Nutter, to Adam Whitworth, who with the other serving-men stared aghast at the accusation; "she has been scared out of her senses by some fearful sight. Let her be conveyed quickly to my chamber, and I will see her cared for."

The orders were obeyed. Dorothy was raised gently by the serving-men, but she still kept pointing to Alizon, and repeatedly exclaimed

"She has bewitched me."

The serving-men shook their heads, and looked significantly at each other, while Mistress Nutter lingered to speak to her daughter.

"You look greatly disturbed, Alizon, as if you had been visited by a nightmare in your sleep, and were still under its influence."

Alizon made no reply.

"A few hours' tranquil sleep will restore you," pursued Mistress Nutter, "and you will forget your fears. You must not indulge in these nocturnal rambles again,

or they may be attended with dangerous consequences. I may not have a second warning dream. Come to the house."

And, as Alizon followed her along the garden path, she could not help asking herself, though with little hope in the question, if all she had witnessed was indeed nothing more than a troubled dream.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

BOOK THE SECOND.

Pendle Forest.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

FLINT.

A LOVELY morning succeeded the strange and terrible night. Brightly shone the sun upon the fair Calder as it winded along the green meads above the bridge, as it rushed rejoicingly over the weir, and pursued its rapid course through the broad plain below the Abbey. A few white vapours hung upon the summit of Whalley Nab, but the warm rays tinging them with gold, and tipping with fire the tree-tops that pierced through them, augured their speedy dispersion. So beautiful, so tranquil, looked the old monastic fane, that none would have deemed its midnight rest had been broken by the impious rites of a foul troop. The choir where the unearthly scream and the demon laughter had resounded was now vocal with the melodies of the blackbird, the thrush, and other songsters of the grove. Bells of dew glittered upon the bushes rooted in the

walls, and upon the ivy-grown pillars; and gemming the countless spiders' webs stretched from bough to bough showed they were all unbroken. No traces were visible on the sod where the unhallowed crew had danced their round; nor were any ashes left where the fire had burnt and the cauldron had bubbled. The brass-covered tombs of the abbots in the presbytery looked as if a century had passed over them without disturbance, while the graves in the cloister cemetery, obliterated, and only to be detected when a broken coffin or a mouldering bone was turned up by the tiller of the ground, preserved their wonted appearance. The face of nature had received neither impress nor injury from the fantastic freaks and necromantic exhibitions of the witches. Every thing looked as it was left overnight; and the only foot-prints to be detected were those of the two girls, and of the party who came in quest of them. All else had passed by like a vision or a dream. The rooks cawed loudly in the neighbouring trees, as if discussing the question of breakfast, and the jackdaws wheeled merrily round the tall spire, which sprang from the eastern end of the fane.

Brightly shone the sun upon the noble timber embowering the mansion of the Asshetons; upon the ancient gateway, in the upper chamber of which Ned Huddlestone, the porter, and the burly representative of Friar Tuck was rubbing his sleepy eyes, preparatory to habiting himself in his ordinary attire; and upon the wide court-yard, across which Nicholas was walking in the

direction of the stables. Notwithstanding his excesses overnight, the squire was astir, as he had declared he should be, before daybreak; and a plunge into the Calder had cooled his feverish limbs and cured his racking headache, while a draught of ale set his stomach right. Still, in modern parlance, he looked rather "seedy," and his recollection of the events of the previous night was somewhat confused. Aware he had committed many fooleries, he did not desire to investigate matters too closely, and only hoped he should not be reminded of them by Sir Ralph, or worse still, by Parson Dewhurst. As to his poor, dear, uncomplaining wife, he never once troubled his head about her, feeling quite sure she would not upbraid him. On his appearance in the court-yard, the two noble blood-hounds, and several lesser dogs came forward to greet him, and attended by this noisy pack, he marched up to a groom, who was rubbing down his horse at the stable-door.

"Poor Robin," he cried to the steed, who neighed at his approach. "Poor Robin," he said, patting his neck affectionately, "there is not thy match for speed or endurance, for fence or ditch, for beck or stone wall, in the country. Half an hour on thy back will make all right with me; but I would rather take thee to Bowland Forest, and hunt the stag there, than go and perambulate the boundaries of the Rough Lee estates with a rascally attorney. I wonder how the fellow will be mounted."

"If yo be speering about Mester Potts, squoire," observed the groom, "ey con tell ye. He's to ha' little Flint, the Welsh pony."

"Why, zounds, you don't say, Peter!" exclaimed Nicholas, laughing; "he'll never be able to manage him. Flint's the wickedest, and most wilful little brute I ever knew. We shall have Master Potts run away with, or thrown into a moss-pit. Better give him something quieter."

"It's Sir Roaph's orders," replied Peter, "an ey darna disobey 'em. Boh Flint's far steadier than when yo seed him last, squoire. Ey dar say he'll carry Mester Potts weel enough, if he dusna misles him."

"You think nothing of the sort, Peter," said Nicholas. "Yo expect to see the little gentleman fly over the pony's head, and perhaps break his own, at starting. But if Sir Ralph has ordered it, he must abide by the consequences. I shan't interfere further. How goes on the young colt you were breaking in? You should take care to show him the saddle in the manger, let him smell it, and jingle the stirrups in his ears, before you put it on his back. Better ground for his first lessons could not be desired, than the field below the grange, near the Calder. Sir Ralph was saying yesterday, that the roan mare had pricked her foot. You must wash the sore well with white wine and salt, rub it with the ointment the farriers call œgyptiacum, and then put upon it a hot plaister compounded of flax hards, turpen-

tine, oil and wax, bathing the top of the hoof with bole armeniac and vinegar. This is the best and quickest remedy. And recollect, Peter, that for a new strain, vinegar, bole armeniac, whites of eggs, and bean-flower make the best salve. How goes on Sir Ralph's black charger Dragon? A brave horse that, Peter, and the only one in your master's whole stud to compare with my Robin! But Dragon, though of high courage and great swiftness, has not the strength and endurance of Robin—neither can he leap so well. Why Robin would almost clear the Calder, Peter, and makes nothing of Smithies Brook, near Downham, and you know how wide that stream is. I once tried him at the Ribble, at a narrow point, and if horse could have done it, he would—but it was too much to expect."

"A great deal, ey should say, squoire," replied the groom, opening his eyes to their widest extent. "Whoy, th' Ribble, where yo speak on, mun be twenty yards across, if it be an inch; and no nag os ever wur bred could clear that, onless a witch wur on his back."

"Don't allude to witches, Peter," said Nicholas. "I've had enough of them. But to come back to our steeds. Colour is matter of taste, and a man must please his own eye with bay or gray, chestnut, sorrel, or black; but dun is my fancy. A good horse, Peter, should be clean-limbed, short-jointed, strong-hoofed, out-ribbed, broad-chested, deep-necked, loose-throttled, thin-crested, lean-headed, full-eyed, with wide nostrils.

A horse with half these points would not be wrong, and Robin has them all."

"So he has sure enough, squoire," replied Peter, regarding the animal with an approving eye, as Nicholas enumerated his merits. "Boh, if ey might choose betwixt him an yunk Mester Ruchot Assheton's gray gelding, Merlin, ey knoas which ey'd tak."

"Robin, of course," said Nicholas.

"Nah, squoire, it should be t'other," replied the groom.

"You're no judge of a horse, Peter," rejoined Nicholas, shrugging his shoulders.

"May be not," said the groom, "boh ey'm bound to speak truth. An see! Tum Lomax is bringin' out Merlin. We con put th' two nags soide by soide, if yo choose."

"They shall be put side by side in the field, Peter—that's the way to test their respective merit," returned Nicholas, "and they won't remain long together, I'll warrant you. I offered to make a match for twenty pieces with Master Richard, but he declined the offer. Harkee, Peter, break an egg in Robin's mouth before you put on his bridle. It strengthens the wind, and adds to a horse's power of endurance. You understand."

"Parfitly, squoire," replied the groom. "By th' mess! that's a secret worth knoain'. Onny more orders?"

"No," replied Nicholas. "We shall set out in an hour—or it may be sooner."

"Aw shan be ready," said Peter. And he added

to himself, as Nicholas moved away, "Ey'st tak care Tom Lomax gies an egg to Merlin, an that'll may aw fair, if they chance to try their osses' mettle."

As Nicholas returned to the house, he perceived to his dismay Sir Ralph and Parson Dewhurst standing upon the steps, and convinced, from their grave looks, that they were prepared to lecture him, he endeavoured to nerve himself for the infliction.

"Two to one are awkward odds," said the squire, to himself, "especially when they have the 'vantage ground. But I must face them, and make the best fight circumstances will allow. I shall never be able to explain that mad dance with Isole de Heton. No one but Dick will believe me, and the chances are he will not support my story. But I must put on an air of penitence, and sooth to say, in my present state, it is not very difficult to assume."

Thus pondering, with slow step, affectedly humble demeanour, and surprisingly-lengthened visage, he approached the pair who were waiting for him, and regarding him with severe looks.

Thinking it the best plan to open the fire himself, Nicholas saluted them, and said,

"Give you good day, Sir Ralph, and you, too, worthy Master Dewhurst. I scarcely expected to see you so early astir, good sirs, but the morning is too beautiful to allow us to be sluggards. For my own part I have been awake for hours, and have passed the time wholly in self-reproaches for my folly and sinfulness

last night, as well as in forming resolutions for self-amendment, and better governance in future."

"I hope you will adhere to those resolutions, then, Nicholas," rejoined Sir Ralph, sternly; "for change of conduct is absolutely necessary, if you would maintain your character as a gentleman. I can make allowance for high animal spirits, and can excuse some licence, though I do not approve of it, but I will not permit decorum to be outraged in my house, and suffer so ill an example to be set to my tenantry."

"Fortunately, I was not present at the exhibition," said Dewhurst, "but I am told you conducted yourself like one possessed, and committed such freaks as are rarely, if ever, acted by a rational being."

"I can offer no defence, worthy sir, and you my respected relative," returned Nicholas, with a contrite air; "neither can you reprove me more strongly than I deserve, nor than I upbraid myself. I allowed myself to be overcome by wine, and in that condition was undoubtedly guilty of follies I must ever regret."

"Amongst others, I believe you stood upon your head," remarked Dewhurst.

"I am not aware of the circumstance, reverend sir," replied Nicholas, with difficulty repressing a smile; "but as I certainly lost my head, I may have stood upon it unconsciously. But I do recollect enough to make me heartily ashamed of myself, and determine to avoid all such excesses in future."

"In that case, sir," rejoined Dewhurst, "the occur-

rences of last night, though sufficiently discreditable to you, will not be without profit; for I have observed, to my infinite regret, that you are apt to indulge in immoderate potations, and when under their influence, to lose due command of yourself, and commit follies which your sober reason must condemn. At such times I scarcely recognise you. You speak with unbecoming levity, and even allow oaths to escape your lips."

"It is too true, reverend sir," said Nicholas; "but, zounds!—a plague upon my tongue—it is an unruly member. Forgive me, good sir, but my brain is a little confused."

"I do not wonder from the grievous assaults made upon it last night, Nicholas," observed Sir Ralph. "Perhaps you are not aware that your crowning act was whisking wildly round the room by yourself like a frantic dervish."

"I was dancing with Isole de Heton," said Nicholas.

"With whom?" inquired Dewhurst, in surprise.

"With a wicked votaress, who has been dead nearly a couple of centuries," interposed Sir Ralph; "and who, by her sinful life, merited the punishment she is said to have incurred. This delusion shows how dreadfully intoxicated you were, Nicholas. For the time you had quite lost your reason."

"I am sober enough now, at all events," rejoined Nicholas; "and I am convinced that Isole did dance with me, nor will any arguments reason me out of that belief."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Nicholas," returned Sir Ralph. "That you were under the impression at the time I can easily understand, but that you should persist in such a senseless and wicked notion, is more than I can comprehend."

"I saw her with my own eyes as plainly as I see you, Sir Ralph," replied Nicholas, warmly, "that I declare upon my honour and conscience, and I also felt the pressure of her arms. Whether it may not have been the Fiend in her likeness I will not take upon me to declare, and indeed I have some misgivings on the subject, but that a beautiful creature, exactly resembling the votaress, danced with me, I will ever maintain."

"If so, she was invisible to others, for I beheld her not," said Sir Ralph, "and though I cannot yield credence to your explanation, yet granting it to be correct, I do not see how it mends your case."

"On the contrary, it only proves that Master Nicholas yielded to the snares of Satan," said Dewhurst, shaking his head. "I would recommend you long fasting and frequent prayer, my good sir, and I shall prepare a lecture for your special edification, which I will propound to you on your return to Downham, and if it fails in effect, I will persevere with other godly discourses."

"With your aid, I trust to be set free, reverend sir," returned Nicholas; "but as I have already passed two or three hours in prayer, I hope they may stand me in lieu of any present fasting, and induce you to omit the article

of penance, or postpone it to some future occasion, when I may be better able to perform it, for I am just now particularly hungry, and am always better able to resist temptation with a full stomach than an empty one. As I find it displeasing to Sir Ralph, I will not insist upon my visionary partner in the dance, at least, until I am better able to substantiate the fact; and I shall listen to your lectures, worthy sir, with great delight, and, I doubt not, with equal benefit; but in the meantime, as carnal wants must be supplied, and mundane matters attended to, I propose, with our excellent host's permission, that we proceed to breakfast."

Sir Ralph made no answer, but ascended the steps, and was followed by Dewhurst, heaving a deep sigh, and turning up the whites of his eyes, and by Nicholas, who felt his bosom eased of half its load, and secretly congratulated himself upon getting out of the scrape so easily.

In the hall they found Richard Assheton habited in a riding-dress, booted, spurred, and in all respects prepared for the expedition. There were such evident traces of anxiety and suffering about him, that Sir Ralph questioned him as to the cause, and Richard replied that he had passed a most restless night. He did not add that he had been made acquainted by Adam Whitworth with the midnight visit of the two girls to the conventual church, because he was well aware Sir Ralph would be greatly displeased by the circumstance, and because Mistress Nutter had expressed a wish that

it should be kept secret. Sir Ralph, however, saw there was more upon his young relative's mind than he chose to confess, but he did not urge any further admission into his confidence.

Meantime, the party had been increased by the arrival of Master Potts, who was likewise equipped for the ride. The hour was too early, it might be, for him, or he had not rested well like Richard, or had been troubled with bad dreams, but certainly he did not look very well, or in very good humour. He had slept at the Abbey, having been accommodated with a bed after the sudden seizure which he attributed to the instrumentality of Mistress Nutter. The little attorney bowed obsequiously to Sir Ralph, who returned his salutation very stiffly, nor was he much better received by the rest of the company.

At a sign from Sir Ralph, his guests then knelt down, and a prayer was uttered by the divine—or rather a discourse, for it partook more of the latter character than the former. In the course of it he took occasion to paint in strong colours the terrible consequences of intemperance, and Nicholas was obliged to endure a well-merited lecture of half-an-hour's duration. But even Parson Dewhurst could not hold out for ever, and to the relief of all his hearers, he at length brough this discourse to a close.

Breakfast at this period was a much more substantial affair than a modern morning repast, and differed little from dinner or supper, except in respect to quan-

tity. On the present occasion, there were carbonadoes of fish and fowl, a cold chine, a huge pasty, a capon, neats' tongues, sausages, botargos, and other matters as provocative of thirst as sufficing to the appetite. Nicholas set to work bravely. Broiled trout, steaks, and a huge slice of venison pasty, disappeared quickly before him, and he was not quite so sparing of the ale as seemed consistent with his previously-expressed resolutions of temperance. In vain Parson Dewhurst filled a goblet with water and looked significantly at him. He would not take the hint, and turned a deaf ear to the admonitory cough of Sir Ralph. He had little help from the others, for Richard ate sparingly, and Master Potts made a very poor figure beside him. At length, having cleared his plate, emptied his cup, and wiped his lips, the squire arose, and said he must bid adieu to his wife, and should then be ready to attend them.

While he quitted the hall for this purpose, Mistress Nutter entered it. She looked paler than ever, and her eyes seemed larger, darker, and brighter. Nicholas shuddered slightly as she approached, and even Potts felt a thrill of apprehension pass through his frame. He scarcely, indeed, ventured a look at her, for he dreaded her mysterious power, and feared she could fathom the designs he secretly entertained against her. But she took no notice whatever of him. Acknowledging Sir Ralph's salutation, she motioned Richard to follow her to the further end of the room.

"Your sister is very ill, Richard," she said, as the

young man attended her, "feverish, and almost light-headed. Adam Whitworth has told you, I know, that she was imprudent enough, in company with Alizon, to visit the ruins of the conventual church late last night, and she there sustained some fright which has produced a great shock upon her system. When found, she was fainting, and though I have taken every care of her, she still continues much excited, and rambles strangely. You will be surprised as well as grieved when I tell you that she charges Alizon with having bewitched her."

"How, madam!" cried Richard. "Alizon bewitch her. It is impossible."

"You are right, Richard," replied Mistress Nutter; "the thing is impossible; but the accusation will find easy credence among the superstitious household here, and may be highly prejudicial, if not fatal to poor Alizon. It is most unlucky she should have gone out in this way, for the circumstance cannot be explained, and in itself serves to throw suspicion upon her."

"I must see Dorothy before I go," said Richard; "perhaps I may be able to soothe her."

"It was for that end I came hither," replied Mistress Nutter; "but I thought it well you should be prepared. Now come with me."

Upon this they left the hall together, and proceeded to the abbot's chamber, where Dorothy was lodged. Richard was greatly shocked at the sight of his sister, so utterly changed was she from the blithe being of yesterday—then so full of health and happiness. Her

cheeks burnt with fever, her eyes were unnaturally bright, and her fair hair hung about her face in disorder. She kept fast hold of Alizon, who stood beside her.

"Ah, Richard!" she cried, on seeing him, "I am glad you are come. You will persuade this girl to restore me to reason—to free me from the terrors that beset me. She can do so if she will."

"Calm yourself, dear sister," said Richard, gently endeavouring to free Alizon from her grasp.

"No, do not take her from me," said Dorothy, wildly; "I am better when she is near me—much better. My brow does not throb so violently, and my limbs are not twisted so painfully. Do you know what ails me, Richard?"

"You have caught cold from wandering out indiscreetly last night," said Richard.

"I am bewitched!" rejoined Dorothy, in tones that pierced her brother's brain—"bewitched by Alizon Device—by your love—ha! ha! She wishes to kill me, Richard, because she thinks I am in her way. But you will not let her do it."

"You are mistaken, dear Dorothy. She means you no harm," said Richard.

"Heaven knows how much I grieve for her, and how fondly I love her," exclaimed Alizon, tearfully.

"It is false!" cried Dorothy. "She will tell a different tale when you are gone. She is a witch, and you shall never marry her, Richard—never!—never!"

Mistress Nutter, who stood at a little distance, anx-

iously observing what was passing, waved her hand several times towards the sufferer, but without effect.

"I have no influence over her," she muttered. "She is really bewitched. I must find other means to quieten her."

Though both greatly distressed, Alizon and Richard redoubled their attentions to the poor sufferer. For a few moments she remained quiet, but with her eyes constantly fixed on Alizon, and then said quickly and fiercely, "I have been told, if you scratch one who has bewitched you till you draw blood you will be cured. I will plunge my nails in her flesh."

"I will not oppose you," replied Alizon, gently; "tear my flesh if you will. You should have my life's blood, if it would cure you; but if the success of the experiment depends on my having bewitched you it will assuredly fail."

"This is dreadful," interposed Richard. "Leave her, Alizon, I entreat of you. She will do you an injury."

"I care not," replied the young maid. "I will stay by her till she voluntarily releases me."

The almost tigress fury with which Dorothy had seized upon the unresisting girl here suddenly deserted her, and sobbing hysterically, she fell upon her neck. Oh, with what delight Alizon pressed her to her bosom!

"Dorothy, dear Dorothy!" she cried.

"Alizon, dear Alizon!" responded Dorothy. "Oh! how could I suspect you of any ill design against me!"

"She is no witch, dear sister, be assured of that!" said Richard.

"Oh, no—no—no, I am quite sure she is not," cried Dorothy, kissing her affectionately.

This change had been wrought by the low-breathed spells of Mistress Nutter.

"The access is over," she mentally ejaculated, "but I must get him away before the fit returns. You had better go now, Richard," she added aloud, and touching his arm, "I will answer for your sister's restoration. An opiate will produce sleep, and if possible, she shall return to Middleton to-day."

"If I go, Alizon must go with me," said Dorothy.

"Well, well, I will not thwart your desires," rejoined Mistress Nutter. And she made a sign to Richard to depart.

The young man pressed his sister's hand, bade a tender farewell to Alizon, and, infinitely relieved by the improvement which had taken place in the former, and which he firmly believed would speedily lead to her entire restoration, descended to the entrance-hall, where he found Sir Ralph and Parson Dewhurst, who told him that Nicholas and Potts were in the court-yard, and impatient to set out.

Shouts of laughter saluted the ears of the trio, as they descended the steps. The cause of the merriment was speedily explained when they looked towards the stables, and beheld Potts struggling for mastery with a stout Welsh pony, who showed every disposition, by plunging,

kicking, and rearing, to remove him from his seat, though without success, for the attorney was not quite such a contemptible horseman as might be imagined. A wicked-looking little fellow was Flint, with a rough, rusty-black coat, a thick tail, that swept the ground, a mane to match, and an eye of mixed fire and cunning. When brought forth, he had allowed Potts to mount him quietly enough, but no sooner was the attorney comfortably in possession than he was served with a notice of ejectment. Down went Flint's head and up went his heels, while on the next instant he was rearing aloft, with his fore feet beating the air, so nearly perpendicular, that the chances seemed in favour of his coming down on his back. Then he whirled suddenly round, shook himself violently, threatened to roll over, and performed antics of the most extraordinary kind, to the dismay of his rider, but to the infinite amusement of the spectators, who were ready to split their sides with laughter—indeed tears fairly streamed down the squire's cheeks. However, when Sir Ralph appeared it was thought desirable to put an end to the fun, and Peter, the groom, advanced to seize the restive little animal's bridle, but eluding the grasp, Flint started off at full gallop, and, accompanied by the two bloodhounds, careered round the court-yard, as if running in a ring. Vainly did poor Potts tug at the bridle. Flint, having the bit firmly between his teeth, defied his utmost efforts. Away he went with the hounds at his heels, as if, said Nicholas, "the devil were behind him." Though annoyed and

angry, Sir Ralph could not help laughing at the ridiculous scene, and even a smile crossed Parson Dewhurst's grave countenance as Flint and his rider scampered madly past them. Sir Ralph called to the grooms, and attempts were instantly made to check the furious pony's career, but he baffled them all, swerving suddenly round when an endeavour was made to intercept him, leaping over any trifling obstacle, and occasionally charging any one who stood in his path. What with the grooms running hither and thither, vociferating and swearing, the barking and springing of the hounds, the yelping of lesser dogs, and the screaming of poultry, the whole yard was in a state of uproar and confusion.

"Flint mun be possessed," cried Peter. "Ey never seed him go on i' this way efore. Ey noticed Elizabeth Device near th' stables last neet, an ey shouldna wonder if hoo ha' bewitched him."

"Neaw doubt on't," replied another groom. "Howsomever we mun contrive to ketch him, or Sir Roaph win send us aw abowt our business."

"Ey wish yo'd contrive to do it, then, Tum Lomax," replied Peter, "fo' ey'm fairly blowd. Dang me, if ey ever seed sich hey-go-mad wark i' my born days. What's to be done, squoire?" he added to Nicholas.

"The devil only knows," replied the latter; "but it seems we must wait till the little rascal chooses to stop."

This occurred sooner than was expected. Thinking,

possibly, that he had done enough to induce Master Potts to give up all idea of riding him, Flint suddenly slackened his pace, and trotted as if nothing had happened, to the stable-door; but if he had formed any such notion as the above, he was deceived, for the attorney, who was quite as obstinate and wilful as himself, and who through all his perils had managed to maintain his seat, was resolved not to abandon it, and positively refused to dismount when urged to do so by Nicholas and the grooms.

"He will go quietly enough now, I dare say," observed Potts, "and if not and you will lend me a hunting-whip I will undertake to cure him of his tricks."

Flint seemed to understand what was said, for he laid back his ears as if meditating more mischief, but being surrounded by the grooms, he deemed it advisable to postpone the attempt to a more convenient opportunity. In compliance with his request, a heavy hunting-whip was handed to Potts, and armed with this formidable weapon, the little attorney quite longed for an opportunity of effacing his disgrace. Meanwhile, Sir Ralph had come up and ordered a steady horse out for him; but Master Potts adhered to his resolution, and Flint remaining perfectly quiet, the baronet let him have his own way.

Soon after this, Nicholas and Richard having mounted their steeds, the party set forth. As they were passing through the gateway, which had been thrown wide open by Ned Huddlestone, they were joined by Simon Spar-

shot, who had been engaged by Potts to attend him on the expedition in his capacity of constable. Simon was mounted on a mule, and brought word that Master Roger Nowell begged they would ride round by Read Hall, where he would be ready to accompany them, as he wished to be present at the perambulation of the boundaries. Assenting to the arrangement, the party set forth in that direction, Richard and Nicholas riding a little in advance of the others.

CHAPTER II.

READ HALL.

THE road taken by the party on quitting Whalley led up the side of a hill, which, broken into picturesque inequalities, and partially clothed with trees, sloped down to the very brink of the Calder. Winding round the broad green plain, heretofore described, with the lovely knoll in the midst of it, and which formed with the woody hills encircling it, a perfect amphitheatre, the river was ever an object of beauty—sometimes lost beneath overhanging boughs or high banks, anon bursting forth where least expected, now rushing swiftly over its shallow and rocky bed, now subsiding into a smooth full current. The Abbey and the village were screened from view by the lower part of the hill which the horsemen were scaling, but the old bridge and a few cottages at the foot of Whalley Nab, with their thin blue smoke mounting into the pure morning air, gave life and interest to the picture. Hence, from base to summit, Whalley Nab stood revealed, and the verdant lawns opening out amidst

the woods feathering its heights, were fully discernible. Placed by Nature as the guardian of this fair valley, the lofty eminence well became the post assigned to it. None of the belt of hills connected with it were so well wooded as their leader, nor so beautiful in form, while some of them were overtopped by the bleak fells of Longridge, rising at a distance behind them.

Nor were those exquisite contrasts wanting, which are only to be seen in full perfection when the day is freshest and the dew is still heavy on the grass. The near side of the hill was plunged in deep shade; thin, gauzy vapour hung on the stream beneath, while on the opposite heights, and where the great boulder stones were visible in the bed of the river, all was sparkling with sunshine. So enchanting was the prospect, that though perfectly familiar with it, the two foremost horsemen drew in the rein to contemplate it. High above them, on a sandbank, through which their giant roots protruded, shot up two tall silver-stemm'd beech-trees, forming with their newly opened foliage a canopy of tenderest green. Further on appeared a grove of oaks scarcely in leaf; and below were several fine sycamores, already green and umbrageous, intermingled with elms, ashes, and horse-chestnuts, and overshadowing brakes covered with maples, alders, and hazels. The other spaces among the trees were enlivened by patches of yellow-flowering and odorous gorse. Mixed with the warblings of innumerable feathered songsters were heard the cheering notes of the cuckoo; and the newly-arrived swallows were seen chasing

the flies along the plain, or skimming over the surface of the river. Already had Richard's depression yielded to the exhilarating freshness of the morning, and the same kindly influence produced a more salutary effect on Nicholas than Parson Dewhurst's lecture had been able to accomplish. The worthy squire was a true lover of Nature; admiring her in all her forms, whether arrayed in pomp of wood and verdure, as in the lovely landscape before him, or dreary and desolate as in the heathy forest wastes they were about to traverse. While breathing the fresh morning air, inhaling the fragrance of the wild flowers and listening to the warbling of the birds, he took a well-pleased survey of the scene, commencing with the bridge, passing over Whalley Nab and the mountainous circle conjoined with it, till his gaze settled on Morton Hall, a noble mansion finely situated on a shoulder of the hill beyond him, and commanding the entire valley.

"Were I not owner of Downham," he observed, to Richard, "I should wish to be master of Morton." And then pointing to the green area below he added, "What a capital spot for a race! There we might try the speed of our nags for the twenty pieces I talked of yesterday; and the judges of the match and those who chose to look on might station themselves on yon knoll, which seems made for the express purpose. Three years ago I remember a fair was held upon that plain, and the foot races, the wrestling matches, and the various sports and pastimes of the

rustics, viewed from the knoll, formed the prettiest sight ever looked upon. But pleasant as the prospect is, we must not tarry here all day."

Before setting forward, he cast a glance towards Pendle Hill, which formed the most prominent object of view on the left, and lay like a leviathan basking in the sunshine. The vast mass rose up gradually until at its further extremity it attained an altitude of more than 1800 feet above the sea. At the present moment it was without a cloud, and the whole of its broad outline was distinctly visible.

"I love Pendle Hill," cried Nicholas, enthusiastically; "and from whatever side I view it—whether from this place, where I see it from end to end, from its lowest point to its highest; from Padiham, where it frowns upon me; from Clithero, where it smiles; or from Downham, where it rises in full majesty before me—from all points and under all aspects, whether robed in mist or radiant with sunshine, I delight in it. Born beneath its giant shadow I look upon it with filial regard. Some folks say Pendle Hill wants grandeur and sublimity, but they themselves must be wanting in taste. Its broad, round, smooth mass is better than the roughest, craggiest, shaggiest, most sharply splintered mountain of them all. And then what a view it commands!—Lancaster with its gray old castle on one hand; York with its reverend minster on the other—the Irish Sea and its wild coast—fell, forest, moor,

and valley, watered by the Ribble, the Hodder, the Calder and the Lime—rivers not to be matched for beauty. You recollect the old distich—

> 'Ingleborough, Pendle Hill, and Pennygent,
> Are the highest hills between Scotland and Trent.'

This vouches for its height, but there are two other doggerel lines still more to the purpose—

> 'Pendle Hill, Pennygent, and Ingleborough,
> Are three such hills as you'll not find by seeking England thorough.'

With this opinion I quite agree. There is no hill in England like Pendle Hill."

"Every man to his taste, squire," observed Potts; "but, to my mind, Pendle Hill has no other recommendation than its size. I think it a great, brown, ugly, lumpy mass, without beauty of form or any striking character. I hate your bleak Lancashire hills, with heathy ranges on the top, fit only for the sustenance of a few poor half-starved sheep; and as to the view from them, it is little else than a continuous range of moors and dwarfed forests. Highgate Hill is quite mountain enough for me, and Hampstead Heath wild enough for any civilised purpose."

"A veritable son of Cockayne!" muttered Nicholas, contemptuously.

Riding on, and entering the grove of oaks he lost sight of his favourite hill, though glimpses were occasionally caught through the trees of the lovely valley below.

Soon afterwards the party turned off on the left and presently arrived at a gate which admitted them to Read Park. Five minutes' canter over the springy turf then brought them to the house.

The manor of Reved or Read came into the possession of the Nowell family in the time of Edward III., and extended on one side, within a mile of Whalley, from which township it was divided by a deep woody ravine, taking its name from the little village of Sabden, and on the other stretched far into Pendle Forest. The hall was situated on an eminence forming part of the heights of Padiham, and faced a wide valley, watered by the Calder, and consisting chiefly of barren tracts of moor and forest land, bounded by the high hills near Accrington and Rossendale. On the left, some half-dozen miles off, lay Burnley, and the greater part of the land in this direction being uninclosed and thinly peopled, had a dark dreary look, that served to enhance the green beauty of the well-cultivated district on the right. Behind the mansion, thick woods extended to the very confines of Pendle Forest, of which, indeed, they originally formed part, and here, if the course of the stream, flowing through the gully of Sabden, were followed, every variety of brake, glen, and dingle, might be found. Read Hall was a large and commodious mansion, forming with a centre and two advancing wings three sides of a square, between which was a grassplot ornamented with a dial. The gardens were laid out in the taste of the time with trim

alleys and parterres, terraces and steps, stone statues, and clipped yews.

The house was kept up well and consistently by its owner, who lived like a country gentleman with a good estate, entertained his friends hospitably, but without any parade, and was never needlessly lavish in his expenditure, unless, perhaps, in the instanee of the large ostentatious pew erected by him in the parish church of Whalley, and which, considering he had a private chapel at home, and maintained a domestic chaplain to do duty in it, seemed little required, and drew upon him the censure of the neighbouring gossips, who said there was more of pride than religion in his pew. With the chapel at the hall a curious history was afterwards connected. Converted into a dining-room by a descendant of Roger Nowell, the apartment was incautiously occupied by the planner of thc alterations, before the plaster was thoroughly dried; in consequence of which he caught a severe cold, and died in the desecrated chamber, his fate being looked upon as a judgment.

With many good qualities Roger Nowell was little liked. His austere and sarcastic manner repelled his equals, and his harshness made him an object of dislike and dread among his inferiors. Besides being the terror of all evil doers, he was a hard man in his dealings, though he endeavoured to be just, and persuaded himself he was so. A year or two before, having been appointed sheriff of the county, he had discharged the important

office with so much zeal and ability, as well as liberality, that he rose considerably in public estimation. It was during this period that Master Potts came under his notice at Lancaster, and the little attorney's shrewdness gained him an excellent client in the owner of Read. Roger Nowell was a widower, but his son, who resided with him, was married, and had a family, so that the hall was fully occupied.

Roger Nowell was turned sixty, but he was still in the full vigour of mind and body, his temperate and active habits keeping him healthy; he was of a spare muscular frame, somewhat bent in the shoulders, and had very sharp features, keen gray eyes, a close mouth, and prominent chin. His hair was white as silver, but his eyebrows were still black and bushy.

Seeing the party approach, the lord of the mansion came forth to meet them, and begged them to dismount for a moment and refresh themselves. Richard excused himself, but Nicholas sprang from his saddle, and Potts, though somewhat more slowly, imitated his example. An open door admitted them to the entrance hall, where a repast was spread, of which the host pressed his guests to partake, but Nicholas declined on the score of having just breakfasted; notwithstanding which he was easily prevailed upon to take a cup of ale. Leaving him to discuss it, Nowell led the attorney to a well-furnished library, where he usually transacted his magisterial business, and held a few minutes' private conference with him, after which they

returned to Nicholas, and by this time the magistrate's own horse being brought round, the party mounted once more. The attorney regretted abandoning his seat, for Flint indulged him with another exhibition somewhat similar to the first, though of less duration, for a vigorous application of the hunting-whip brought the wrong-headed little animal to reason.

Elated by the victory he had obtained over Flint, and anticipating a successful issue to the expedition, Master Potts was in excellent spirits, and found a great deal to admire in the domain of his honoured and singular good client. Though not very genuine, his admiration was deservedly bestowed. The portion of the park they were now traversing was extremely diversified and beautiful, with long sweeping lawns studded with fine trees, among which were many ancient thorns, now in full bloom, and richly scenting the gale. Herds of deer were nipping the short grass, browsing the lower spray of the ashes, or couching amid the ferny hollows.

It was now that Nicholas, who had been all along anxious to try the speed of his horse, proposed to Richard a gallop towards a clump of trees about a mile off, and the young man assenting, away they started. Master Potts started too, for Flint did not like to be left behind, but the mettlesome pony was soon distanced. For some time the two horses kept so closely together, that it was difficult to say which would arrive at the goal first; but, by and by, Robin got a-head. Though at first indifferent to the issue of the race, the spirit

of emulation soon seized upon Richard, and spurring Merlin, the noble animal sprang forward, and was once again by the side of his opponent.

For a quarter of a mile the ground had been tolerably level, and the sod firm; but they now approached a swamp, and in his eagerness Nicholas did not take sufficient precaution, and got involved in it before he was aware. Richard was more fortunate, having kept on the right, where the ground was hard. Seeing Nicholas struggling out of the marshy soil, he would have stayed for him, but the latter bade him go on, saying he would soon be up with him, and he made good his words. Shortly after this their course was intercepted by a brook, and both horses having cleared it excellently, they kept well together again for a short time, when they neared a deep dyke which lay between them and the clump of trees. On descrying it Richard pointed out a course to the left, but Nicholas held on, unheeding the caution. Fully expecting to see him break his neck, for the dyke was of formidable width, Richard watched him with apprehension, but the squire gave him a re-assuring nod, and went on. Neither horse nor man faltered, though failure would have been certain destruction to both. The wide trench now yawned before them—they were upon its edge, and without trusting himself to measure it with his eye, Nicholas clapped spurs into Robin's sides. The brave horse sprang forward and landed him safely on the opposite bank. Hallooing cheerily, as soon as he could

check his courser, the squire wheeled round, and rode back to look at the dyke he had crossed. Its width was terrific and fairly astounded him. Robin snorted loudly, as if proud of his achievement, and showed some disposition to return, but the squire was quite content with what he had done. The exploit afterwards became a theme of wonder throughout the country, and the spot was long afterwards pointed out as "Squire Nicholas's Leap;" but there was not another horseman found daring enough to repeat the experiment.

Richard had to make a considerable circuit to join his cousin, and while he was going round Nicholas looked out for the others. In the distance he could see Roger Nowell riding leisurely on, followed by Sparshot and a couple of grooms, who had come with their master from the hall, while midway, to his surprise, he perceived Flint galloping without a rider. A closer examination showed the squire what had happened. Like himself Master Potts had incautiously approached the swamp, and getting entangled in it was thrown, head foremost, into the slough; out of which he was now floundering, covered from head to foot with inky-coloured slime. As soon as they were aware of the accident the two grooms pushed forward, and one of them galloped after Flint, whom he succeeded at last in catching, while the other, with difficulty preserving his countenance at the woful plight of the attorney, who looked as black as a negro, pointed out a cottage in the hollow, which belonged to one of the keepers, and offered

to conduct him thither. Potts gladly assented, and soon gained the little tenement, where he was being washed and rubbed down by a couple of stout wenches, when the rest of the party came up. It was impossible to help laughing at him, but Potts took the merriment in good part, and to show he was not disheartened by the misadventure, as soon as circumstances would permit, he mounted the unlucky pony, and the cavalcade set forward again.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOGGART'S GLEN.

THE manor of Read, it has been said, was skirted by a deep woody ravine of three or four miles in length, extending from the little village of Sabden, in Pendle Forest, to within a short distance of Whalley ; and through this gully flowed a stream, which taking its rise near Barley, at the foot of Pendle Hill, added its waters to those of the Calder, at a place called Cock Bridge. In summer, or in dry seasons, this stream proceeded quietly enough, and left the greater part of its stony bed unoccupied; but in winter, or after continuous rains, it assumed all the character of a mountain torrent, and swept every thing before it. A narrow bridle road led through the ravine to Sabden, and along it, after quitting the park, the cavalcade proceeded, headed by Nicholas.

The little river danced merrily past them, singing as it went, the sunshine sparkling on its bright clear waters, and glittering on the pebbles beneath them. Now the stream would chafe and foam against some

larger impediment to its course ; now it would dash down some rocky height and form a beautiful cascade ; then it would hurry on for some time with little interruption, till stayed by a projecting bank it would form a small deep basin, where, beneath the far-cast shadow of an overhanging oak, or under its huge twisted and denuded roots, the angler might be sure of finding the speckled trout, the dainty greyling, or their mutual enemy, the voracious jack. The ravine was well wooded throughout, and in many parts singularly beautiful, from the disposition of the timber on its banks, as well as from the varied form and character of the trees. Here might be seen an acclivity covered with waving birch, or a top crowned with a mountain ash—there on a smooth expanse of green sward stood a range of noble elms, whose mighty arms stretched completely across the ravine. Further on, there were chestnuts and walnut trees, willows, with hoary stems and silver leaves, almost encroaching upon the stream, larches upon the heights, and here and there, upon some sandy eminence, a spreading beach-tree. For the most part the bottom of the glen was overgrown with brushwood, and where its sides were too abrupt to admit the growth of larger trees, they were matted with woodbine and brambles. Out of these would sometimes start a sharp pinnacle, or fantastically-formed crag, adding greatly to the picturesque beauty of the scene. On such points were not unfrequently found perched a hawk, a falcon, or some large bird of prey, for the gully, with its brakes and

thickets, was a favourite haunt of the feathered tribe. The hollies, of which there were plenty, with their green prickly leaves, and scarlet berries, afforded shelter and support to the blackbird; the thorns were frequented by the thrush; and numberless lesser songsters filled every other tree. In the covert there were pheasants and partridges in abundance, and snipe and wild-fowl resorted to the river in winter. Thither, also, at all seasons, repaired the stately heron, to devour the finny race; and thither came, on like errand, the splendidly-plumed king-fisher. The magpie chattered, the jay screamed, and flew deeper into the woods as the horsemen approached, and the shy bittern hid herself amid the rushes. Occasionally, too, was heard the deep ominous croaking of a raven.

Hitherto, the glen had been remarkable for its softness and beauty, but it now began to assume a savage and sombre character. The banks drew closer together, and became rugged and precipitous; while the trees met overhead, and, intermingling their branches, formed a canopy impervious to the sun's rays. The stream was likewise contracted in its bed, and its current, which, owing to the gloom, looked black as ink, flowed swiftly on, as if anxious to escape to livelier scenes. A large raven, which had attended the horsemen all the way, now alighted near them, and croaked ominously.

This part of the glen was in very ill repute, and was never traversed, even at noon-day, without apprehension. Its wild and savage aspect, its horrent precipices, its

shaggy woods, its strangely-shaped rocks and tenebrous depths, where every imperfectly-seen object appeared doubly frightful—all combined to invest it with mystery and terror. No one willingly lingered here, but hurried on, afraid of the sound of his own footsteps. No one dared to gaze at the rocks lest he should see some hideous hobgoblin peering out of their fissures. No one glanced at the water for fear some terrible kelpy, with twining snakes for hair and scaly hide, should issue from it and drag him down to devour him with his shark-like teeth. Among the common folk this part of the ravine was known as "the boggart's glen," and was supposed to be haunted by mischievous beings who made the unfortunate wanderer their sport.

For the last half-mile the road had been so narrow and intricate in its windings, that the party were obliged to proceed singly; but this did not prevent conversation, and Nicholas, throwing the bridle over Robin's neck, left the sure-footed animal to pursue his course unguided, while he himself leaning back, chatted with Roger Nowell. At the entrance of the gloomy gorge above described Robin came to a stand, and refusing to move at a jerk from his master, the latter raised himself, and looked forward to see what could be the cause of the stoppage. No impediment was visible, but the animal obstinately refused to go on, though urged both by word and spur. This stoppage necessarily delayed the rest of the cavalcade.

Well aware of the ill reputation of the place, when Simon Sparshot and the grooms found that Robin would

not go on, they declared he must see the boggart, and urged the squire to turn back, or some mischief would befal him. But Nicholas, though not without misgivings, did not like to yield thus, especially when urged on by Roger Nowell. Indeed, the party could not get out of the ravine without going back nearly a mile, while Sabden was only half that distance from them. What was to be done? Robin still continued obstinate, and for the first time paid no attention to his master's commands. The poor animal was evidently a prey to violent terror, and snorted and reared, while his limbs were bathed in cold sweat.

Dismounting, and leaving him in charge of Roger Nowell, Nicholas walked on by himself to see if he could discover any cause for the horse's alarm, and he had not advanced far, when his eye rested upon a blasted oak forming a conspicuous object on a crag before him, on a scathed branch of which sat the raven.

Croak! croak! croak!

"Accursed bird, it is thou who hast frightened my horse," cried Nicholas. "Would I had a cross-bow or an arquebuss to stop thy croaking."

And as he picked up a stone to cast at the raven, a crashing noise was heard among the bushes high up on the rock, and the next moment a huge fragment dislodged from the cliff rolled down, and would have crushed him, if he had not nimbly avoided it.

Croak! croak! croak!

Nicholas almost fancied hoarse laughter was mingled with the cries of the bird.

The raven nodded its head, and expanded its wings, and the squire, whose recent experience had prepared him for any wonder, fully expected to hear it speak, but it only croaked loudly and exultingly, or if it laughed, the sound was like the creaking of rusty hinges.

Nicholas did not like it at all, and he resolved to go back, but ere he could do so, he was startled by a buffet on the ear, and turning angrily round to see who had dealt it, he could distinguish no one, but at the same moment received a second buffet on the other ear.

The raven croaked merrily.

"Would I could wring thy neck, accursed bird!" cried the enraged squire.

Scarcely was the vindictive wish uttered than a shower of blows fell upon him, and kicks from unseen feet were applied to his person.

All the while the raven croaked merrily, and flapped his big black wings.

Infuriated by the attack, the squire hit right and left manfully, and dashed out his feet in every direction, but his blows and kicks only met the empty air, while those of his unseen antagonist told upon his own person with increased effect.

The spectacle seemed to afford infinite amusement to the raven. The mischievous bird almost crowed with glee.

There was no standing it any longer. So amid a perfect hurricane of blows and kicks, and with the infernal voice of the raven ringing in his ears, the squire

took to his heels. On reaching his companions he found they had not fared much better than himself. The two grooms were belabouring each other lustily; and Master Potts was exercising his hunting-whip on the broad shoulders of Sparshot, who in return was making him acquainted with the taste of a stout ash plant. Assailed in the same manner as the squire, and naturally attributing the attack to their nearest neighbours, they waited for no explanation, but fell upon each other. Richard Assheton and Roger Nowell endeavoured to interfere and separate the combatants, and in doing so received some hard knocks for their pains; but all their pacific efforts were fruitless, until the squire appeared, and telling them they were merely the sport of hobgoblins, they desisted, but still the blows fell heavily on them as before, proving the truth of Nicholas's assertion.

Meanwhile, the squire had mounted Robin, and, finding the horse no longer exhibit the same reluctance to proceed, he dashed at full speed through the haunted glen; but even above the clatter of hoofs, and the noise of the party galloping after him, he could hear the hoarse exulting croaking of the raven.

As the gully expanded, and the sun once more found its way through the trees, and shone upon the river, Nicholas began to breathe more freely; but it was not until fairly out of the wood that he relaxed his speed. Not caring to enter into any explanation of the occurrence, he rode a little apart, to avoid conversa-

tion, and, as the others, who were still smarting from the blows they had received, were in no very good humour, a sullen silence prevailed throughout the party, as they mounted the bare hill side in the direction of the few scattered huts constituting the village of Sabden.

A blight seemed to have fallen upon the place. Roger Nowell, who had visited it a few months ago, could scarcely believe his eyes, so changed was its appearance. His inquiries as to the cause of its altered condition were everywhere met by the same answer—the poor people were all bewitched. Here a child was ill of a strange sickness, tossed and tumbled in its bed, and contorted its limbs so violently, that its parents could scarcely hold it down. Another family was afflicted in a different manner, two of its number pining away and losing strength daily, as if a prey to some consuming disease. In a third, another child was sick, and vomited pins, nails, and other extraordinary substances. A fourth household was tormented by an imp in the form of a monkey, who came at night and pinched them all black and blue, spilt the milk, broke the dishes and platters, got under the bed, and raising it to the roof, let it fall with a terrible crash; putting them all in mental terror. In the next cottage there was no end to calamities, though they took a more absurd form. Sometimes the fire would not burn, or when it did it emitted no heat, so that the pot would not boil, nor the meat roast. Then the oat cakes would stick to the bake-stone, and no force

could get them away from it till they were burnt and spoiled; the milk turned sour, the cheese became so hard that not even rats' teeth could gnaw it, the stools and settles broke down if sat upon, and the list of petty grievances was completed by a whole side of bacon being devoured in a single night. Roger Nowell and Nicholas listened patiently to a detail of all these grievances, and expressed strong sympathy for the sufferers, promising assistance and redress if possible. All the complainants taxed either Mother Demdike or Mother Chattox with afflicting them, and said they had incurred the anger of the two malevolent old witches by refusing to supply them with poultry, eggs, milk, butter, or other articles, which they had demanded. Master Potts made ample notes of the strange relations, and took down the name of every cottager.

At length, they arrived at the last cottage, and here a man, with a very doleful countenance, besought them to stop and listen to his tale.

"What is the matter, friend?" demanded Roger Nowell, halting, with the others. "Are you bewitched like your neighbours?"

"Troth am ey, your warship," replied the man, "an ey hope yo may be able to deliver me. Yo mun knoa, that somehow ey wor unlucky enough last Yule to offend Mother Chattox, an ever sin then aw's gone wrang wi' me. Th' good wife con never may butter come without stickin' a red-hot poker into t' churn; and last week, when our brindlt sow farrowed, and

had fifteen to t' litter, an' fine uns os ever yo seed, seign on um deed. Sad wark ! sad wark, mesters. The week efore that t' keaw deed ; an th' week efore her th' owd mare, so that aw my stock be gone. Waes me ! waes me ! Nowt prospers wi' me. My poor dame is besoide hersel, an' th' chilter seems possessed. Ey ha' tried every remedy, boh without success. Ey ha' followed th' owd witch whoam, plucked a hontle o' thatch fro' her roof, sprinklet it wi' sawt anweter, burnt it an buried th' ess at th' change o' t' moon. No use, mesters. Then again, ey ha' getten a horse-shoe, heated it red hot, quenched it i' brine, an' nailed it to t' threshold wi' three nails, heel uppard. No more use nor t'other. Then ey ha' taen sawt weter, and put it in a bottle wi' three rusty nails, needles, and pins, boh ey hanna found that the witch ha' suffered thereby. An, lastly, ey ha' let myself blood, when the moon wur at full, an in opposition to th' owd hag's planet, an minglin' it wi' sawt, ha' burnt it i' a trivet, in hopes of afflictin' her ; boh without avail, fo' ey seed her two days ago, an she flouted me an scoffed at me. What mun ey do, good mesters ? What mun ey do ?"

"Have you offended any one besides Mother Chattox, my poor fellow?" said Nowell.

"Mother Demdike, may be, your warship," replied the man.

"You suspect Mother Demdike and Mother Chattox of bewitching you," said Potts, taking out his me-

morandum-book, and making a note in it. "Your name, good fellow ?"

"Oamfrey o' Will's o' Ben's o' Tummas' o' Sabden," replied the man.

"Is that all?" asked Potts.

"What more would you have?" said Richard. "The description is sufficiently particular."

"Scarcely precise enough," returned Potts. "However, it may do. We will help you in the matter, good Humphrey Etcera. You shall not be troubled with these pestilent witches much longer. The neighbourhood shall be cleared of them."

"Ey'm reet glad to hear, mester," replied the man.

"You promise much, Master Potts," observed Richard.

"Not a jot more than I am able to perform," replied the attorney.

"That remains to be seen," said Richard. "If these old women are as powerful as represented, they will not be so readily defeated."

"There you are in error, Master Richard," replied Potts. "The devil, whose vassals they are, will deliver them into our hands."

"Granting what you say to be correct, the devil must have little regard for his servants if he abandons them so easily," observed Richard, drily.

"What else can you expect from him ?" cried Potts. "It is his custom to ensnare his victims, and then leave them to their fate."

"You are rather describing the course pursued by certain members of your own profession, Master Potts," said Richard. "The devil behaves with greater fairness to his clients."

"You are not going to defend him, I hope, sir?" said the attorney.

"No; I only desire to give him his due," returned Richard.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Nicholas. "You had better have done, Master Potts; you will never get the better in the argument. But we must be moving, or we shall not get our business done before nightfall. As to you, Numps," he added, to the poor man, "we will not forget you. If any thing can be done for your relief, rely upon it, it shall not be neglected."

"Ay, ay," said Nowell, "the matter shall be looked into—and speedily."

"And the witches brought to justice," said Potts; "comfort yourself with that, good Humphrey Etcera."

"Ay, comfort yourself with that," observed Nicholas.

Soon after this they entered a wide dreary waste forming the bottom of the valley, lying between the heights of Padiham and Pendle Hill, and while wending their way across it, they heard a shout from the hill side, and presently afterwards perceived a man mounted on a powerful black horse, galloping swiftly towards them. The party awaited his approach, and the stranger speedily came up. He was a small man habited in a suit of rusty black, and bore a most extraordinary

and marked resemblance to Master Potts. He had the same perky features, the same parchment complexion, the same yellow forehead as the little attorney. So surprising was the likeness, that Nicholas unconsciously looked round for Potts, and beheld him staring at the new-comer in angry wonder.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REEVE OF THE FOREST.

THE surprise of the party was by no means diminished when the stranger spoke. His voice exactly resembled the sharp cracked tones of the attorney.

"I crave pardon for the freedom I have taken in stopping you, good masters," he said, doffing his cap, and saluting them respectfully; "but being aware of your errand, I am come to attend you on it."

"And who are you, fellow, who thus volunteer your services?" demanded Roger Nowell, sharply.

"I am one of the reeves of the forest of Blackburnshire, worshipful sir," replied the stranger, "and as such my presence at the intended perambulation of the boundaries of her property has been deemed necessary by Mistress Nutter, as I shall have to make a representation of the matter at the next court of swainmote."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Nowell, "but how knew you we were coming?"

"Mistress Nutter sent me word last night," replied the reeve, "that Master Nicholas Assheton and certain other gentlemen, would come to Rough Lee for the purpose of ascertaining the marks, meres, and boundaries of her property, early this morning, and desired my attendance on the occasion. Accordingly I stationed myself on yon high ground to look out for you, and have been on the watch for more than an hour."

"Humph!" exclaimed Roger Nowell, "and you live in the forest?"

"I live at Barrowford, worshipful sir," replied the reeve, "but I have only lately come there, having succeeded Maurice Mottisfont, the other reeve, who has been removed by the master forester to Rossendale, where I formerly dwelt."

"That may account for my not having seen you before," rejoined Nowell. "You are well mounted, sirrah. I did not know the master forester allowed his men such horses as the one you ride."

"This horse does not belong to me, sir," replied the reeve, "it has been lent me by Mistress Nutter."

"Aha! I see how it is now," cried Nowell; "you are suborned to give false testimony, knave. I object to his attendance, Master Nicholas."

"Nay, I think you do the man injustice," said the squire. "He speaks frankly and fairly enough, and seems to know his business. The worst that can be said against him is, that he resembles somewhat too closely our little legal friend there. That, however, ought to

be no objection to you, Master Nowell, but rather the contrary."

"Well, take the responsibility of the matter upon your own shoulders," said Nowell; "if any ill comes of it I shall blame you."

"Be it so," replied the squire, "my shoulders are broad enough to bear the burthen. You may ride with us, master reeve."

"May I inquire your name, friend?" said Potts, as the stranger fell back to the rear of the party.

"Thomas Potts, at your service, sir," replied the reeve.

"What!—Thomas Potts!" exclaimed the astonished attorney.

"That is my name, sir," replied the reeve, quietly.

"Why, zounds!" exclaimed Nicholas, who overheard the reply, "you do not mean to say your name is Thomas Potts? This is more wonderful still. You must be this gentleman's twin brother."

"The gentleman certainly seems to resemble me very strongly," replied the reeve, apparently surprised in his turn. "Is he of these parts?"

"No, I am not," returned Potts, angrily, "I am from London, where I reside in Chancery-lane, and practise the law, though I likewise attend as clerk of the court at the assizes at Lancaster, where I may possibly, one of these days, have the pleasure of seeing you, my pretended namesake."

"Possibly, sir," said the reeve, with provoking calm-

ness. "I myself am from Chester, and like yourself was brought up to the law, but I abandoned my profession, or rather it abandoned me, for I had few clients; so I took to an honester calling, and became a forester as you see. My father was a draper in the city I have mentioned, and dwelt in Watergate-street—his name was Peter Potts."

"Peter Potts your father!" exclaimed the attorney, in the last state of astonishment—"why he was mine! But I am his only son."

"Up to this moment I conceived myself an only son," said the reeve; "but it seems I was mistaken, since I find I have an elder brother."

"Elder brother!" exclaimed Potts, wrathfully. "You are older than I am by twenty years. But it is all a fabrication. I deny the relationship entirely."

"You cannot make me other than the son of my father," said the reeve, with a smile.

"Well, Master Potts," interposed Nicholas, laughing, "I see no reason why you should be ashamed of your brother. There is a strong family likeness between you. So old Peter Potts, the draper of Chester, was your father, eh? I was not aware of the circumstance before—ha, ha!"

"And but for this intrusive fellow, you would never have become aware of it," muttered the attorney. "Give ear to me, squire," he said, urging Flint close up to the other's side, and speaking in a low tone, "I do not like the fellow's looks at all."

"I am surprised at that," rejoined the squire, "for he exactly resembles you."

"That is why I do not like him," said Potts. "I believe him to be a wizard."

"You are no wizard to think so," rejoined the squire. And he rode on to join Roger Nowell, who was a little in advance.

"I will try him on the subject of witchcraft," thought Potts. "As you dwell in the forest," he said to the reeve, "you have no doubt seen those two terrible beings, Mothers Demdike and Chattox?"

"Frequently," replied the reeve, "but I would rather not talk about them in their own territories. You may judge of their power by the appearance of the village you have just quitted. The inhabitants of that unlucky place refused them their customary tributes, and have therefore incurred their resentment. You will meet other instances of the like kind before you have gone far."

"I am glad of it, for I want to collect as many cases as I can of witchcraft," observed Potts.

"They will be of little use to you," observed the reeve.

"How so?" inquired Potts.

"Because if the witches discover what you are about, as they will not fail to do, you will never leave the forest alive," returned the other.

"You think not?" cried Potts.

"I am sure of it," replied the reeve.

"I will not be deterred from the performance of my duty," said Potts. "I defy the devil and all his works."

"You may have reason to repent your temerity," replied the reeve.

And, anxious apparently to avoid further conversation on the subject, he drew in the rein for a moment, and allowed the attorney to pass on.

Notwithstanding his boasting, Master Potts was not without much secret misgiving, but his constitutional obstinacy made him determine to prosecute his plans at any risk, and he comforted himself by recalling the opinion of his sovereign authority on such matters.

"Let me ponder over the exact words of our British Solomon," he thought. "I have his learned treatise by heart, and it is fortunate my memory serves me so well, for the sagacious prince's dictum will fortify me in my resolution, which has been somewhat shaken by this fellow, whom I believe to be no better than he should be, for all he calls himself my father's son, and hath assumed my likeness, doubtless for some mischievous purpose. 'If the magistrate,' saith the King, 'be slothful towards witches, God is very able to make them instruments to waken and punish his sloth.' No one can accuse me of slothfulness and want of zeal. My best exertions have been used against the accursed creatures. And now for the rest. 'But if, on the contrary, he be diligent in examining and punishing them, God will not permit their master

to trouble or hinder so good a work!' Exactly what I have done. I am quite easy now, and shall go on fearlessly as before. I am one of the 'lawful lieutenants' described by the King, and cannot be 'defrauded or deprived' of my office."

As these thoughts passed through the attorney's mind a low derisive laugh sounded in his ears, and connecting it with the reeve, he looked back and found the object of his suspicions gazing at him, and chuckling maliciously. So fiendishly malignant, indeed, was the gaze fixed upon him, that Potts was glad to turn his head away to avoid it.

"I am confirmed in my suspicions," he thought; "he is evidently a wizard, if he be not—"

Again the mocking laugh sounded in his ears, but he did not venture to look round this time, being fearful of once more encountering the terrible gaze.

Meanwhile, the party had traversed the valley, and to avoid a dangerous morass stretching across its lower extremity, and shorten the distance—for the ordinary road would have led them too much to the right—they began to climb one of the ridges of Pendle Hill, which lay between them and the vale they wished to gain. On obtaining the top of this eminence, an extensive view on either side opened upon them. Behind was the sterile valley they had just crossed, its black soil, hoary grass, and heathy wastes, only enlivened at one end by patches of bright sulphur-coloured moss, which masked a treacherous quagmire lurking beneath it.

Some of the cottages in Sabden were visible, and from the sad circumstances connected with them, and which oppressed the thoughts of the beholders, added to the dreary character of the prospect. The day, too, had lost its previous splendour, and there were clouds overhead which cast deep shadows on the ground. But on the crest of Pendle Hill, which rose above them, a sun-burst fell, and attracted attention from its brilliant contrast to the prevailing gloom. Before them lay a deep gully, the sinuosities of which could be traced from the elevated position where they stood, though its termination was hidden by other projecting ridges. Further on, the sides of the mountain were bare and rugged, and covered with shelving stone. Beyond the defile before-mentioned, and over the last mountain ridge, lay a wide valley, bounded on the further side by the hills overlooking Colne, and the mountain defile, now laid open to the travellers, exhibiting in the midst of the dark heathy ranges, which were its distinguishing features, some marks of cultivation. In parts it was inclosed and divided into paddocks by stone walls, and here and there a few cottages were collected together, dignified, as in the case of Sabden, by the name of a village. Amongst these were the Heyhouses, an assemblage of small stone tenements, the earliest that arose in the forest ; Goldshaw Booth, now a populous place, and even then the largest hamlet in the district ; and in the distance Ogden and Barley, the two latter scarcely comprising a dozen habitations,

and those little better than huts. In some sheltered nook on the hill side might be discerned the solitary cottage of a cowherd, and not far from it the certain accompaniment of a sheepfold. Throughout this weird region, thinly peopled it is true, but still of great extent, and apparently abandoned to the powers of darkness, only one edifice could be found where its inhabitants could meet to pray, and this was an ancient chapel at Goldshaw Booth, originally erected in the reign of Henry III., though subsequently in part rebuilt in 1544, and which, with its low gray tower peeping from out the trees, was just discernible. Two halls were in view; one of which, Sabden, was of considerable antiquity, and gave its name to the village; and the other was Hoarstones, a much more recently erected mansion, strikingly situated on an acclivity of Pendle Hill. In general the upper parts of this mountain monarch of the waste were bare and heathy, while the heights overhanging Ogden and Barley were rocky, shelving, and precipitous, but the lower ridges were well covered with wood, and a thicket, once forming part of the ancient forest, ran far out into the plain near Goldshaw Booth. Numerous springs burst from the mountain side, and these, collecting their forces, formed a considerable stream, which, under the name of Pendle Water, flowed through the valley above described, and after many picturesque windings, entered the rugged glen in which Rough Lee was situated, and swept past the foot of Mistress Nutter's residence.

Descending the hill, and passing through the thicket, the party came within a short distance of Goldshaw Booth, when they were met by a cowherd, who, with looks of great alarm, told them that John Law, the pedlar, had fallen down in a fit in the clough, and would perish if they did not stay to help him. As the poor man in question was well known both to Nicholas and Roger Nowell, they immediately agreed to go to his assistance, and accompanied the cowherd along a bye-road which led through the clough to the village. They had not gone far when they heard loud groans, and presently afterwards found the unfortunate pedlar lying on his back, and writhing in agony. He was a large, powerfully-built man, of middle age, and had been in the full enjoyment of health and vigour, so that his sudden prostration was the more terrible. His face was greatly disfigured, the mouth and neck drawn awry, the left eye pulled down, and the whole power of the same side gone.

"Why, John, this is a bad business," cried Nicholas. "you have had a paralytic stroke, I fear."

"Nah—nah—squoire," replied the sufferer, speaking with difficulty, "it's neaw nat'ral ailment—its witchcraft."

"Witchcraft!" exclaimed Potts, who had come up, and producing his memorandum book. "Another case. Your name and description, friend?"

"John Law, o' Cown, pedlar," replied the man.

"John Law, of Colne, I suppose, petty chapman,"

said Potts, making an entry. "Now, John, my good man, be pleased to tell us by whom you have been bewitched?"

"By Mother Demdike," groaned the man.

"Mother Demdike, ah?" exclaimed Potts, "good! very good. Now, John, as to the cause of your quarrel with the old hag?"

"Ey con scarcely rekillect it, my head be so confused, mester," replied the pedlar.

"Make an effort, John," persisted Potts, "it is most desirable such a dreadful offender should not escape justice."

"Weel, weel, ey'n try an tell it then," replied the pedlar. "Yo mun knoa ey wur crossing the hill fro' Cown to Rough Lee, wi' my pack upon my shouthers, when who should ey meet boh Mother Demdike, an hoo axt me to gi' her some scithers an pins, boh, os ill luck wad ha' it, ey refused. 'Yo had better do it, John,' hoo said, 'or yo'll rue it efore to-morrow neet.' Ey laughed at her, an trudged on, boh when I looked back, an seed her shakin' her skinny hond at me, ey repented and thowt ey would go back, an gi' her the choice o' my wares. Boh my pride wur too strong, an ey walked on to Barley an Ogden, an slept at Bess's o' th' booth, an woke this mornin' stout and strong, fully persuaded th' owd witch's threat would come to nowt. Alack a day! ey wur out i' my reckonin', fo' scarcely had ey reached this kloof, o' my way to Sabden, than ey wur seized wi' a sudden shock, os if a thun-

der-bowt had hit me, an ey lost the use o' my lower limbs, an t' laft soide, an should ha' deed most likely, if it hadna bin fo' Ebil o' Jem's o' Dan's, who spied me out, an brought me help."

"Yours is a deplorable case indeed, John," said Richard—"especially if it be the result of witchcraft."

"You do not surely doubt that it is so, Master Richard ?" cried Potts.

"I offer no opinion," replied the young man; "but a paralytic stroke would produce the same effect. But instead of discussing the matter, the best thing we can do will be to transport the poor man to Bess's o' th' booth, where he can be attended to."

"Tom and I can carry him there, if Abel will take charge of his pack," said one of the grooms.

"That I win," replied the cowherd, unstrapping the box, upon which the sufferer's head rested, and placing it on his own shoulders.

Meanwhile, a gate having been taken from its hinges, by Sparshot and the reeve, the poor pedlar, who groaned deeply during the operation, was placed upon it by the men, and borne towards the village, followed by the others, leading their horses.

Great consternation was occasioned in Goldshaw Booth by the entrance of the cavalcade, and still more, when it became known that John Law, the pedlar, who was a favourite with all, had had a frightful seizure. Old and young flocked forth to see him, and the former shook their heads, while the latter were appalled at the

hideous sight. Master Potts took care to tell them that the poor fellow was bewitched by mother Demdike, but the information failed to produce the effect he anticipated, and served rather to repress than heighten their sympathy for the sufferer. The attorney concluded, and justly, that they were afraid of incurring the displeasure of the vindictive old hag by an open expression of interest in his fate. So strongly did this feeling operate, that after bestowing a glance of commiseration at the pedlar, most of them returned, without a word, to their dwellings.

On their way to the little hostel whither they were conveying the poor pedlar, the party passed the church, and the sexton, who was digging a grave in the yard, came forward to look at them, but on seeing John Law he seemed to understand what had happened, and resumed his employment. A wide-spreading yew tree grew in this part of the churchyard, and near it stood a small cross rudely carved in granite, marking the spot where in the reign of Henry VI. Ralph Cliderhow, tenth abbot of Whalley, held a meeting of the tenantry, to check encroachments. Not far from this ancient cross the sexton, a hale old man, with a fresh complexion and silvery hair, was at work, and while the others went on, Master Potts paused to say a word to him.

"You have a funeral here to-day, I suppose, Master Sexton?" he said.

"Yeigh," replied the man, gruffly.

"One of the villagers?" inquired the attorney.

"Neaw; hoo were na o' Goldshey," replied the sexton.

"Where then—who was it?" persevered Potts.

The sexton seemed disinclined to answer; but at length said, "Meary Baldwyn, the miller's dowter, o' Rough Lee, os protty a lass os ever yo see, mester. Hoo wur the apple o' her feayther's ee, an he hasna had a dry ee sin hoo deed. Wall-a-dey! we mun aw go, owd an young—owd an young—an protty Meary Baldwyn went young enough. Poor lass! poor lass!" and he brushed the dew from his eyes with his brawny hand.

"Was her death sudden?" asked Potts.

"Neaw, not so sudden, mester," replied the sexton. "Ruchot Baldwyn had fair warnin'. Six months ago Meary wur ta'en ill, an fro' t' furst he knoad how it wad eend."

"How so, friend?" asked Potts, whose curiosity began to be aroused.

"Becose—" replied the sexton, and he stopped suddenly short.

"She was bewitched?" suggested Potts.

The sexton nodded his head, and began to ply his mattock vigorously.

"By Mother Demdike?" inquired Potts, taking out his memorandum book.

The sexton again nodded his head, but spake no

word, and, meeting some obstruction in the ground, took up his pick to remove it.

"Another case!" muttered Potts, making an entry. "Mary Baldwyn, daughter of Richard Baldwyn, of Rough Lee, aged—How old was she, sexton?"

"Throtteen," replied the man; "boh dunna ax me ony more questions, mester. Th' berrin takes place i' an hour, an ey hanna half digg'd th' grave."

"Your own name, Master Sexton, and I have done?" said Potts.

"Zachariah Worms," answered the man.

"Worms—ha! an excellent name for a sexton," cried Potts. "You provide food for your family, eh, Zachariah?"

"Tut—tut," rejoined the sexton, testily, "go an' moind yer own bus'ness, mon, an' leave me to moind mine."

"Very well, Zachariah," replied Potts. And having obtained all he required, he proceeded to the little hostel, where, finding the rest of the party had dismounted, he consigned Flint to a cowherd, and entered the house.

CHAPTER V.

BESS'S O' TH' BOOTH.

BESS'S O' TH' BOOTH — for so the little hostel at Goldshaw was called, after its mistress Bess Whitaker —was far more comfortable and commodious than its unpretending exterior seemed to warrant. Stouter and brighter ale was not to be drunk in Lancashire than Bess brewed; nor was better sherris or clary to be found, go where you would, than in her cellars. The traveller crossing those dreary wastes, and riding from Burnley to Clithero, or from Colne to Whalley, as the case might be, might well halt at Bess's, and be sure of a roast fowl for dinner, with the addition, perhaps, of some trout from Pendle Water, or if the season permitted, a heath-cock or a pheasant; or if he tarried there for the night, he was equally sure of a good supper and fair linen. It has already been mentioned, that at this period it was the custom of all classes in the northern counties, men and women, to resort to the ale-houses to drink, and the hostel at Goldshaw was the general rendezvous of the neighbourhood. For those who

could afford it, Bess would brew incomparable sack; but if a guest called for wine, and she liked not his looks, she would flatly tell him her ale was good enough for him, and if it pleased him not he should have nothing. Submission always followed in such cases, for there was no disputing with Bess. Neither would she permit the frequenters of the hostel to sit later than she chose, and would clear the house in a way equally characteristic and effectual. At a certain hour, and that by no means a late one, she would take down a large horsewhip, which hung on a convenient peg in the principal room, and after bluntly ordering her guests to go home, if any resistance were offered, she would lay the whip across their shoulders, and forcibly eject them from the premises; but, as her determined character was well known, this violence was seldom necessary. In strength Bess was a match for any man, and assistance from her cowherds—for she was a farmer as well as hostess—was at hand if required. As will be surmised from the above, Bess was large and masculine-looking, but well-proportioned nevertheless, and possessed a certain coarse kind of beauty, which in earlier years had inflamed Richard Baldwyn, the miller of Rough Lee, who made overtures of marriage to her. These were favourably entertained, but a slight quarrel occurring between them, the lover, in her own phrase, got "his jacket soundly dusted" by her, and declared off, taking to wife a more docile and light-handed maiden. As to Bess, though she had

given this unmistakeable proof of her ability to manage a husband, she did not receive a second offer, nor, as she had now attained the mature age of forty, did it seem likely she would ever receive one.

Bess's o' th' Booth was an extremely clean and comfortable house. The floor, it is true, was of hard clay, and the windows little more than narrow slits, with heavy stone frames, further darkened by minute diamond panes, but the benches were scrupulously clean, and so was the long oak table in the centre of the principal and only large room in the house. A roundabout fire-place occupied one end of the chamber, sheltered from the draught of the door by a dark oak screen, with a bench on the warm side of it, and here, or in the deep ingle nooks, on winter nights, the neighbours would sit and chat by the blazing hearth, discussing pots of "nappy ale, good and stale," as the old ballad hath it; and as persons of both sexes came thither, young as well as old, many a match was struck up by Bess's cheery fire-side. From the blackened rafters hung a goodly supply of hams, sides of bacon, and dried tongues, with a profusion of oat-cakes in a bread-flake, while in case this store should be exhausted, means of replenishment were at hand in the huge, full-crammed meal-chest standing in one corner. Altogether, there was a look of abundance as well as of comfort about the place.

Great was Bess's consternation, when the poor pedlar, who had quitted her house little more than an hour ago, full of health and spirits, was brought back to it in such

a deplorable condition; and when she saw him deposited at her door, notwithstanding her masculine character, she had some difficulty in repressing a scream. She did not, however, yield to the weakness, but seeing at once what was best to be done, caused him to be transported by the grooms to the chamber he had occupied over-night, and laid upon the bed. Medical assistance was fortunately at hand; for it chanced that Master Sudall, the chirurgeon of Colne, was in the house at the time, having been brought to Goldshaw, by the great sickness that prevailed at Sabden and elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Sudall was immediately in attendance upon the sufferer, and bled him copiously, after which the poor man seemed much easier; and Richard Assheton, taking the chirurgeon aside, asked his opinion of the case, and was told by Sudall that he did not think the pedlar's life in danger, but he doubted whether he would ever recover the use of his limbs.

"You do not attribute the attack to witchcraft, I suppose, Master Sudall?" said Richard.

"I do not like to deliver an opinion, sir," replied the chirurgeon. "It is impossible to decide when all the appearances are precisely like those of an ordinary attack of paralysis. But a sad case has recently come under my observation, as to which I can have no doubt —I mean as to its being the result of witchcraft—but I will tell you more about it presently, for I must now return to my patient."

It being agreed among the party to rest for an hour at the little hostel, and partake of some refreshment,

Nicholas went to look after the horses, while Roger Nowell and Richard remained in the room with the pedlar. Bess Whitaker owned an extensive farm-yard, provided with cowhouses, stables, and a large barn; and it was to the latter place that the two grooms proposed to repair with Sparshot and play a game at loggats on the clay floor. No one knew what had become of the reeve, for on depositing the poor pedlar at the door of the hostel, he had mounted his horse and ridden away. Having ordered some fried eggs and bacon, Nicholas wended his way to the stable, while Bess, assisted by a stout kitchen wench, busied herself in preparing the eatables, and it was at this juncture that Master Potts entered the house.

Bess eyed him narrowly, and was by no means prepossessed by his looks, while the muddy condition of his habiliments did not tend to exalt him in her opinion.

"Yo mey yersel a' whoam, mon, ey mun say," she observed, as the attorney seated himself on the bench beside her.

"To be sure," rejoined Potts, "where should a man make himself at home if not at an inn. Those eggs and bacon look very tempting. I'll try some presently; and as soon as you've done with the frying-pan, I'll have a pottle of sack."

"Neaw, yo winna," replied Bess. "Yo'n get nother eggs nor bacon nor sack here ey can promise ye. Ele an whoat kekes mun sarve your turn. Go to t' barn wi' t' other grooms, and play at kittle-pins or nine holes wi' hin, an ey'n send yc some ele."

"I'm quite comfortable where I am, thank you, hostess," replied Potts, "and have no desire to play at kittle-pins or nine holes. But what does this bottle contain?"

"Sherris," replied Bess.

"Sherris!" echoed Potts, "and yet you say I can have no sack. Get me some sugar and eggs, and I'll show you how to brew the drink. I was taught the art by my friend Ben Jonson—rare Ben—ha, ha!"

"Set the bottle down," cried Bess, angrily.

"What do you mean, woman?" said Potts, staring at her in surprise. "I told you to fetch sugar and eggs, and I now repeat the order,—sugar and half-a-dozen eggs at least."

"An ey repeat my order to yo," cried Bess, "to set the bottle down or ey'st may ye."

"Make me! ha, ha! I like that," cried Potts, "Let me tell you, woman, I am not accustomed to be ordered in this way. I shall do no such thing. If you will not bring the eggs I shall drink the wine, neat and unsophisticate." And he filled a flagon near him.

"If yo dun, yo shan pay dearly for it," said Bess, putting aside the frying-pan and taking down the horsewhip.

"I dare say I shall," replied Potts, merrily; "you hostesses generally do make one pay dearly. Very good sherris this, i' faith!—the true nutty flavour. Now do go and fetch me some eggs, my good woman. You must have plenty, with all the poultry I saw in the farm-yard;

and then I'll teach you the whole art and mystery of brewing sack."

"Ey'n teach yo to dispute my orders," cried Bess. And, catching the attorney by the collar, she began to belabour him soundly with the whip.

"Holloa! ho! what's the meaning of this?" cried Potts, struggling to get free. "Assault and battery; ho!"

"Ey'n sawt an batter yo, ay an baste yo too!" replied Bess, continuing to lay on the whip.

"Why, zounds! this passes a joke," cried the attorney. "How desperately strong she is! I shall be murdered! Help! Help! The woman must be a witch."

"A witch! Ey'n teach yo' to ca' me feaw names," cried the enraged hostess, laying on with greater fury.

"Help! help!" roared Potts.

At this moment Nicholas returned from the stables, and seeing how matters stood, flew to the attorney's assistance.

"Come, come, Bess," he cried, laying hold of her arm, "you've given him enough. What has Master Potts been about? Not insulting you, I hope."

"Neaw, ey'd tak keare he didna do that, squoire," replied the hostess. "Ey towd him he'd get nowt boh ele here, an' he made free wi't wine bottle, so ey brought down t' whip jist to teach him manners."

"You teach me, you ignorant and insolent hussey," cried Potts, furiously; "do you think ey'm to be taught

manners by an overgrown Lancashire witch like you? I'll teach you what it is to assault a gentleman. I'll prefer an instant complaint against you to my singular good friend and client, Master Roger, who is in your house, and you'll soon find whom you've got to deal with—"

"Marry—kem—eawt!" exclaimed Bess, "who con it be? Ey took yo fo' one o't grooms, mon."

"Fire and fury," exclaimed Potts, "this is intolerable. Master Nowell shall let you know who I am, woman."

"Nay, I'll tell you, Bess," interposed Nicholas, laughing. "This little gentleman is a London lawyer, who is going to Rough Lee on business with Master Roger Nowell. Unluckily, he got pitched into a quagmire in Read Park, and that is the reason why his countenance and habiliments have got begrimed."

"Eigh! ey thowt he wur i' a strawnge fettle," replied Bess; "an so he be a lawyer fro' Lunnon, eh? Weel," she added, laughing, and displaying two ranges of very white teeth, "he'll remember Bess Whitaker, t' next time he comes to Pendle Forest."

"And she'll remember me," rejoined Potts.

"Neaw more sawce, mon," cried Bess, "or ey'n raddle thy boans again."

"No you won't, woman," cried Potts, snatching up his horsewhip, which he had dropped in the previous scuffle, and brandishing it fiercely. "I dare you to touch me."

Nicholas was obliged once more to interfere, and as he passed his arms round the hostess's waist, he thought

a kiss might tend to bring matters to a peaceable issue, so he took one.

"Ha' done wi' ye, squoire," cried Bess, who, however, did not look very seriously offended by the liberty.

"By my faith, your lips are so sweet that I must have another," cried Nicholas, "I tell you what, Bess, you're the finest woman in Lancashire, and you owe it to the county to get married."

"Whoy so ?" said Bess.

"Because it would be a pity to lose the breed," replied Nicholas. "What say you to Master Potts there ? Will he suit you?"

"He—pooh! Do yo think ey'd put up wi' sich powsement os he! Neaw, when Bess Whitaker, the lonleydey o' Goldshey, weds, it shan be to a mon, and nah to a ninny hommer."

"Bravely resolved, Bess," cried Nicholas. "You deserve another kiss for your spirit."

"Ha' done, ey say," cried Bess, dealing him a gentle tap that sounded very much like a buffet. "See how yon jobberknow is grinnin' at ye."

"Jobberknow and ninny hammer," cried Potts, furiously; "really, woman, I cannot permit such names to be applied to me."

"Os yo please, boh cy'st gi' ye nah better," rejoined the hostess.

"Come, Bess, a truce to this," observed Nicholas, "the eggs and bacon are spoiling, and I'm dying with hunger. There—there," he added, clapping her on the shoulder, "set the dish before us, that's a good

soul—a couple of plates, some oat cakes and butter, and we shall do."

And while Bess attended to these requirements, he observed, "This sudden seizure of poor John Law is a bad business."

"'Deed on it is, squoire," replied Bess, "ey wur quite glopp'nt at seet on him. Lorjus o' me! whoy, it's scarcely an hour sin he left here, lookin' os strong an os 'earty os yersel. Boh it's a kazzardly onsartin loife we lead. Here to-day an gone the morrow, as Parson Houlden says. Wall-a-day!"

"True, true, Bess," replied the squire, "and the best plan, therefore is, to make the most of the passing moment. So brew us each a lusty pottle of sack, and fry us some more eggs and bacon."

And while the hostess proceeded to prepare the sack, Potts remarked to Nicholas, "I have got another case of witchcraft, squire. Mary Baldywn, the miller's daughter, of Rough Lee."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Nicholas. "What, is the poor girl bewitched?"

"Bewitched to death—that's all," said Potts.

"Eigh—poor Meary! hoo's to be berried here this mornin," observed Bess, emptying the bottle of sherris into a pot, and placing the latter on the fire.

"And you think she was forespoken?" said Nicholas, addressing her.

"Folk sayn so," replied Bess; "boh I'd leyther howd my tung about it."

"Then I suppose you pay tribute to Mother Chat-

tox, hostess?" cried Potts,—"butter, eggs, and milk from the farm, ale and wine from the cellar, with a flitch of bacon now and then, ey?"

"Nay, by th' maskins! ey gi' her nowt," cried Bess.

"Then you bribe Mother Demdike, and that comes to the same thing," said Potts.

"Weel, yo're neaw so fur fro' t' mark this time," replied Bess, adding eggs, sugar, and spice to the now boiling wine, and stirring up the compound.

"I wonder where your brother, the reeve of the forest, can be, Master Potts," observed Nicholas. "I did not see either him or his horse at the stables."

"Perhaps the arch impostor has taken himself off altogether," said Potts; "and if so, I shall be sorry, for I have not done with him."

The sack was now set before them, and pronounced excellent, and while they were engaged in discussing it, together with a fresh supply of eggs and bacon, fried by the kitchen wench, Roger Nowell came out of the inner room, accompanied by Richard and the chirurgeon.

"Well, Master Sudall, how goes on your patient?" inquired Nicholas of the latter.

"Much more favourably than I expected, squire," replied the chirurgeon. "He will be better left alone for awhile, and as I shall not quit the village till evening, I shall be able to look well after him."

"You think the attack occasioned by witchcraft, of course, sir?" said Potts.

"The poor fellow affirms it to be so, but I can give no opinion," replied Sudall, evasively.

"You must make up your mind as to the matter, for I think it right to tell you your evidence will be required," said Potts. "Perhaps, you may have seen poor Mary Baldwyn, the miller's daughter, of Rough Lee, and can speak more positively as to her case."

"I can, sir," replied the chirurgeon, seating himself beside Potts, while Roger Nowell and Richard placed themselves on the opposite side of the table. "This is the case I referred to a short time ago, when answering your inquiries om the same subject, Master Richard, and a most afflicting one it is. But you shall have the particulars. Six months ago, Mary Baldwyn was as lovely and blooming a lass as could be seen, the joy of her widowed father's heart. A hot-headed, obstinate man is Richard Baldwyn, and he was unwise enough to incur the displeasure of Mother Demdike, by favouring her rival, old Chattox, to whom he gave flour and meal, while he refused the same tribute to the other. The first time Mother Demdike was dismissed without the customary dole, one of his millstones broke, and, instead of taking this as a warning, he became more obstinate. She came a second time, and he sent her away with curses. Then all his flour grew damp and musty, and no one would buy it. Still he remained obstinate, and when she appeared again, he would have laid hands upon her. But she raised her staff, and the blows fell short. 'I have given thee two warnings, Richard,' she said, 'and thou hast paid no heed to them. Now I will make thee

smart, lad, in right earnest. That which thou lovest best thou shalt lose.' Upon this bethinking him that the dearest thing he had in the world was his daughter Mary, and afraid of harm happening to her, Richard would fain have made up his quarrel with the old witch, but it had now gone too far, and she would not listen to him, but uttering some words with which the name of the girl was mingled, shook her staff at the house and departed. The next day poor Mary was taken ill, and her father, in despair, applied to old Chattox, who promised him help, and did her best, I make no doubt, for she would have willingly thwarted her rival, and robbed her of her prey, but the latter was too strong for her, and the hapless victim got daily worse and worse. Her blooming cheek grew white and hollow, her dark eyes glistened with unnatural lustre, and she was seen no more on the banks of Pendle Water. Before this, my aid had been called in by the afflicted father—and I did all I could—but I knew she would die—and I told him so. The information I feared had killed him, for he fell down like a stone—and I repented having spoken. However he recovered, and made a last appeal to Mother Demdike, but the unrelenting hag derided him and cursed him, telling him if he brought her all his mill contained, and added to that all his substance, she would not spare his child. He returned heart-broken, and never quitted the poor girl's bedside till she breathed her last."

"Poor Ruchot! Robb'd o' his ownly dowter—an neaw woife to cheer him! Ey pity him fro' t' bottom o' my heart," said Bess, whose tears had flowed freely during the narration.

"He is well nigh crazed with grief," said the chirurgeon. "I hope he will commit no rash act."

Expressions of deep commiseration for the untimely death of the miller's daughter had been uttered by all the party, and they were talking over the strange circumstances attending it, when they were roused by the trampling of horse's feet at the door, and the moment after, a middle-aged man, clad in deep mourning, but put on in a manner that betrayed the disorder of his mind, entered the house. His looks were wild and frenzied, his cheeks haggard, and he rushed into the room so abruptly that he did not at first observe the company assembled.

"Why, Richard Baldwyn, is that you?" cried the chirurgeon.

"What! is this the father?" exclaimed Potts, taking out his memorandum-book; "I must prepare to interrogate him."

"Sit thee down, Ruchot,—sit thee down, mon," said Bess, taking his hand kindly, and leading him to a bench. "Con ey get thee onny thing?"

"Neaw—neaw, Bess," replied the miller, "ey ha lost aw ey vallied i' this warlt, an ey care na how soon ey quit it mysel."

"Neigh, dunna talk on thus, Ruchot," said Bess, in

accents of sincere sympathy. "Theaw win live to see happier an brighter days."

"Ey win live to be revenged, Bess," cried the miller, rising suddenly, and stamping his foot on the ground,—"that accursed witch has robbed me o' my 'eart's chief treasure,—hoo has crushed a poor innocent os never injured her i' thowt or deed — an has struck the heaviest blow that could be dealt me; but by the heaven above us ey win requite her! A feayther's deep an lasting curse leet on her guilty heoad, an on those of aw her cursed race. Nah rest, neet nor day, win ey know, till ey ha brought em to the stake."

"Right—right—my good friend—an excellent resolution—bring them to the stake," cried Potts.

But his enthusiasm was suddenly checked by observing the reeve of the forest peeping from behind the wainscot, and earnestly regarding the miller, and he called the attention of the latter to him.

Richard Baldwyn mechanically followed the expressive gestures of the attorney,—but he saw no one, for the reeve had disappeared.

The incident passed unnoticed by the others, who had been too deeply moved by poor Baldwyn's outburst of grief to pay attention to it.

After a little while Bess Whitaker succeeded in prevailing upon the miller to sit down, and when he became more composed he told her that the funeral procession, consisting of some of his neighbours who had undertaken

to attend his ill-fated daughter to her last home, was coming from Rough Lee to Goldshaw, but that unable to bear them company, he had ridden on by himself. It appeared, also, from his muttered threats, that he had meditated some wild project of vengeance against Mother Demdike, which he intended to put into execution before the day was over; but Master Potts endeavoured to dissuade him from this course, assuring him that the most certain and efficacious mode of revenge he could adopt would be through the medium of the law, and that he would give him his best advice and assistance in the matter. While they were talking thus, the bell began to toll, and every stroke seemed to vibrate through the heart of the afflicted father, who was at last so overpowered by grief, that the hostess deemed it expedient to lead him into an inner room where he might indulge his sorrow unobserved.

Without awaiting the issue of this painful scene, Richard, who was much affected by it, went forth, and taking his horse from the stable, with the intention of riding on slowly before the others, led the animal towards the churchyard. When within a short distance of the gray old fabric he paused. The bell continued to toll mournfully, and deepened the melancholy hue of his thoughts. The sad tale he had heard held possession of his mind, and while he pitied poor Mary Baldwyn, he began to entertain apprehensions that Alizon might meet a similar fate. So many strange circumstances had taken place during the morning's ride; he had listened to so many

dismal relations that, coupled with the dark and mysterious events of the previous night, he was quite bewildered, and felt oppressed as if by a hideous nightmare, which it was impossible to shake off. He thought of Mothers Demdike and Chattox. Could these dread beings be permitted to exercise such baneful influence over mankind? With all the apparent proofs of their power he had received, he still strove to doubt, and to persuade himself that the various cases of witchcraft described to him were only held to be such by the timid and the credulous.

Full of these meditations, he tied his horse to a tree and entered the churchyard, and while pursuing a path shaded by a row of young lime trees leading to the porch, he perceived at a little distance from him, near the cross erected by Abbot Cliderhow, two persons who attracted his attention. One was the sexton, who was now deep in the grave; and the other an old woman, with her back towards him. Neither had remarked his approach, and influenced by an unaccountable feeling of curiosity, he stood still to watch their proceedings. Presently, the sexton, who was shovelling out the mould, paused in his task; and the old woman, in a hoarse voice, which seemed familiar to the listener, said, "What hast found, Zachariah?"

"That which yo lack, mother," replied the sexton, "a mazzard wi' aw th' teeth in't."

"Pluck out eight, and give them me," replied the hag.

And, as the sexton complied with her injunction, she added, "Now I must have three scalps."

"Here they be, mother," replied Zachariah, uncovering a heap of mould with his spade. "Two brain-pans bleached loike snow, an the third wi' more hewr on it than ey ha' o' my own sconce. Fro' its size an shape ey should tak it to be a female. Ey ha' laid these three sculls aside fo' ye. Whot dun yo mean to do wi' 'em ?"

"Question me not, Zachariah," said the hag, sternly; "now give me some pieces of the mouldering coffin, and fill this box with the dust of the corpse it contained."

The sexton complied with her request.

"Now yo ha' getten aw yo seek, mother," he said, "ey wad pray you to tay your departure, fo' the berrin folk win be here presently."

"I'm going," replied the hag, "but first I must have my funeral rites performed—ha ! ha ! Bury this for me, Zachariah," she said, giving him a small clay figure. "Bury it deep, and as it moulders away, may she it represents pine and wither, till she come to the grave likewise !"

"An whoam doth it represent, mother ?" asked the sexton, regarding the image with curiosity. "Ey dunna knoa the feace ?"

"How should you know it, fool, since you have never seen her in whose likeness it is made," replied the hag. "She is connected with the race I hate."

"Wi' the Demdikes?" inquired the sexton.

"Ay," replied the hag, "with the Demdikes. She passes for one of them—but she is not of them. Nevertheless, I hate her as though she were."

"Yo dunna mean Alizon Device?" said the sexton. "Ey ha' heerd say hoo be varry comely an kindhearted, an ey should be sorry onny harm befel her."

"Mary Baldwyn, who will soon lie there, was quite as comely and kind-hearted as Alizon," cried the hag, "and yet Mother Demdike had no pity on her."

"An that's true," replied the sexton. "Weel, weel; ey'n do your bidding."

"Hold!" exclaimed Richard, stepping forward. "I will not suffer this abomination to be practised."

"Who is it speaks to me?" cried the hag, turning round, and disclosing the hideous countenance of Mother Chattox. "The voice is that of Richard Assheton."

"It is Richard Assheton who speaks," cried the young man, "and I command you to desist from this wickedness. Give me that clay image," he cried, snatching it from the sexton, and trampling it to dust beneath his feet. "Thus I destroy thy impious handiwork, and defeat thy evil intentions."

"Ah! think'st thou so, lad," rejoined Mother Chattox. "Thou wilt find thyself mistaken. My curse has already alighted upon thee, and it shall work. Thou lov'st Alizon.—I know it. But she shall never be thine. Now, go thy ways."

"I will go," replied Richard—"but you shall come with me, old woman."

"Dare you lay hands on me?" screamed the hag.

"Nay let her be, mester," interposed the sexton, "yo had better."

"You are as bad as she is," said Richard, "and deserve equal punishment. You escaped yesterday at Whalley, old woman, but you shall not escape me now."

"Be not too sure of that," cried the hag, disabling him for the moment, by a severe blow on the arm from her staff. And shuffling off with an agility which could scarcely have been expected from her, she passed through a gate near her, and disappeared behind the high wall.

Richard would have followed, but he was detained by the sexton, who besought him, as he valued his life, not to interfere, and when at last he broke away from the old man, he could see nothing of her, and only heard the sound of horse's feet in the distance. Either his eyes deceived him, or at a turn in the woody lane skirting the church he descried the reeve of the forest galloping off with the old woman behind him. This lane led towards Rough Lee, and without a moment's hesitation, Richard flew to the spot where he had left his horse, and mounting him, rode swiftly along it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEMPTATION.

SHORTLY after Richard's departure, a round, rosy-faced personage, whose rusty black cassock, hastily huddled over a dark riding-dress, proclaimed him a churchman, entered the hostel. This was the rector of Goldshaw, Parson Holden, a very worthy little man, though rather, perhaps, too fond of the sports of the field and the bottle. To Roger Nowell and Nicholas Assheton he was of course well known, and was much esteemed by the latter, often riding over to hunt and fish, or carouse, at Downham. Parson Holden had been sent for by Bess to administer spiritual consolation to poor Richard Baldwyn, who she thought stood in need of it, and having respectfully saluted the magistrate, of whom he stood somewhat in awe, and shaken hands cordially with Nicholas, who was delighted to see him, he repaired to the inner room, promising to come back speedily. And he kept his word; for in less than five minutes he re-appeared with the satisfactory intelligence that the afflicted miller was consider-

ably calmer, and had listened to his counsels with much edification.

"Take him a glass of aqua-vitæ, Bess," he said to the hostess. "He is evidently a cup too low, and will be the better for it. Strong water is a specific I always recommend under such circumstances, Master Sudall, and indeed, adopt myself, and I am sure you will approve of it.—Harkee, Bess, when you have ministered to poor Baldwyn's wants, I must crave your attention to my own, and beg you to fill me a tankard with your oldest ale, and toast me an oat-cake to eat with it.—I must keep up my spirits, worthy sir," he added to Roger Nowell, "for I have a painful duty to perform. I do not know when I have been more shocked than by the death of poor Mary Baldwyn. A fair flower and early nipped."

"Nipped, indeed, if all we have heard be correct," rejoined Nowell. "The forest is in a sad state, reverend sir. It would seem as if the enemy of mankind, by means of his abominable agents, were permitted to exercise uncontrolled dominion over it. I must needs say, the forlorn condition of the people reflects little credit on those who have them in charge. The powers of darkness could never have prevailed to such an extent if duly resisted."

"I lament to hear you say so, good Master Nowell," replied the rector. "I have done my best, I assure you, to keep my small and widely-scattered flock together, and to save them from the ravening wolves

and cunning foxes that infest the country; and if now and then some sheep have gone astray, or a poor lamb, as in the instance of Mary Baldwyn, hath fallen a victim, I am scarcely to blame for the mischance. Rather let me say, sir, that you, as an active and zealous magistrate, should take the matter in hand, and by severe dealing with the offenders, arrest the progress of the evil. No defence, spiritual or otherwise, as yet set up against them, has proved effectual."

"Justly remarked, reverend sir," observed Potts, looking up from the memorandum-book in which he was writing, "and I am sure your advice will not be lost upon Master Roger Nowell. As regards the persons who may be afflicted by witchcraft, hath not our sagacious monarch observed, that 'There are three kind of folks who may be tempted or troubled: the wicked for their horrible sins, to punish them in the like measure; the godly that are sleeping in any great sins or infirmities, and weakness in faith, to waken them up the faster by such an uncouth form: and even some of the best, that their patience may be tried before the world as Job's was tried. For why may not God use any kind of extraordinary punishment, when it pleases Him, as well as the ordinary rods of sickness, or other adversities?'"

"Very true, sir," replied Holden. "And we are undergoing this severe trial now. Fortunate are they who profit by it!"

"Hear what is said further, sir, by the king," pur-

sued Potts. "'No man,' declares that wise prince, 'ought to presume so far as to promise any impunity to himself.' But further on he gives us courage, for he adds, 'and yet we ought not to be afraid for that, of any thing that the devil and his wicked instruments can do against us, for we daily fight against him in a hundred other ways, and therefore as a valiant captain affrays no more being at the combat, nor stays from his purpose for the rummishing shot of a cannon, nor the small clack of a pistolet; not being certain what may light on him; even so ought we boldly to go forward in fighting against the devil without any greater terror, for these his rarest weapons, than the ordinary, whereof we have daily the proof.'"

"His majesty is quite right," observed Holden, "and I am glad to hear his convincing words so judiciously cited. I myself have no fear of these wicked instruments of Satan."

"In what manner, may I ask, have you proved your courage, sir?" inquired Roger Nowell. "Have you preached against them, and denounced their wickedness, menacing them with the thunders of the Church?"

"I cannot say I have," replied Holden, rather abashed, "but I shall henceforth adopt a very different course.—Ah! here comes the ale!" he added, taking the foaming tankard from Bess; "this is the best cordial wherewith to sustain one's courage in these trying times."

"Some remedy must be found for this intolerable

grievance," observed Roger Nowell, after a few moments' reflection. "Till this morning I was not aware of the extent of the evil, but supposed that the two malignant hags, who seem to reign supreme here, confined their operations to blighting corn, maiming cattle, turning milk sour; and even these reports I fancied were greatly exaggerated; but I now find, from what I have seen at Sabden and elsewhere, that they fall very far short of the reality."

"It would be difficult to increase the darkness of the picture," said the chirurgeon, "but what remedy will you apply?"

"The cautery, sir," replied Potts,—"the actual cautery—we will burn out this plague-spot. The two old hags and their noxious brood shall be brought to the stake. That will effect a radical cure."

"It may when it is accomplished, but I fear it will be long ere that happens," replied the chirurgeon, shaking his head doubtfully. "Are you acquainted with Mother Demdike's history, sir?" he added to Potts.

"In part," replied the attorney; "but I shall be glad to hear any thing you may have to bring forward on the subject."

"The peculiarity in her case," observed Sudall, "and the circumstance distinguishing her dark and dread career from that of all other witches is that it has been shaped out by destiny. When an infant, a malediction was pronounced upon her head by the unfortunate Abbot Paslew. She is also the offspring of a

man reputed to have bartered his soul to the Enemy of Mankind, while her mother was a witch. Both parents perished lamentably, about the time of Paslew's execution at Whalley."

"It is a pity their miserable infant did not perish with them," observed Holden. "How much crime and misery would have been spared!"

"It was otherwise ordained," replied Sudall. "Bereft of her parents in this way, the infant was taken charge of and reared by Dame Croft, the miller's wife, of Whalley, but even in those early days she exhibited such a malicious and vindictive disposition, and became so unmanageable, that the good dame was glad to get rid of her, and sent her into the forest, where she found a home at Rough Lee, then occupied by Miles Nutter, the grandfather of the late Richard Nutter."

"Aha!" exclaimed Potts, "was Mother Demdike so early connected with that family? I must make a note of that circumstance."

"She remained at Rough Lee for some years," returned Sudall, "and though accounted of an ill disposition, there was nothing to be alleged against her at the time; though, afterwards, it was said, that some mishaps that befel the neighbours were owing to her agency, and that she was always attended by a familiar in the form of a rat or a mole. Whether this were so or not, I cannot say, but it is certain that she helped Miles Nutter to get rid of his wife, and procured him a second spouse, in return for which services he bestowed upon her an old ruined tower on his domains."

"You mean Malkin Tower?" said Nicholas.

"Ay, Malkin Tower," replied the chirurgeon. "There is a legend connected with that structure, which I will relate to you anon, if you desire it. But to proceed. Scarcely had Bess Demdike taken up her abode in this lone tower, than it began to be rumoured that she was a witch, and attended sabbaths on the summit of Pendle Hill, and on Rimington Moor. Few would consort with her, and ill-luck invariably attended those with whom she quarrelled. Though of hideous and forbidding aspect, and with one eye lower set than the other, she had subtlety enough to induce a young man named Sothernes to marry her, and two children, a son and a daughter, were the fruit of the union."

"The daughter I have seen at Whalley," observed Potts; "but I have never encountered the son."

"Christopher Demdike still lives, I believe," replied the chirurgeon, "though what has become of him I know not, for he has quitted these parts. He is as ill-reputed as his mother, and has the same strange and fearful look about the eyes."

"I shall recognise him if I see him," observed Potts.

"You are scarcely likely to meet him," returned Sudall, "for, as I have said, he has left the forest. But to return to my story. The marriage state was little suitable to Bess Demdike, and in five years she contrived to free herself from her husband's restraint and ruled alone in the tower. Her malignant influence now began to be felt throughout the whole district, and by dint of menaces

and positive acts of mischief, she extorted all she required. Whosoever refused her requests speedily experienced her resentment. When she was in the fulness of her power, a rival sprang up in the person of Anne Whittle, since known by the name of Chattox, which she obtained in marriage, and this woman disputed Bess Demdike's supremacy. Each strove to injure the adherents of her rival—and terrible was the mischief they wrought. In the end, however, Mother Demdike got the upper hand. Years have flown over the old hag's head, and her guilty career has been hitherto attended with impunity. Plans have been formed to bring her to justice, but they have ever failed. And so in the case of old Chattox. Her career has been as baneful and as successful as that of Mother Demdike."

"But their course is well-nigh run," said Potts, "and the time is come for the extirpation of the old serpents."

"Ah! who is that at the window?" cried Sudall; "but that you are sitting near me, I should declare you were looking in at us."

"It must be Master Potts's brother, the reeve of the forest," observed Nicholas, with a laugh.

"Heed him not," cried the attorney, angrily, "but let us have the promised legend of Malkin Tower."

"Willingly!" replied the chirurgeon. "But before I begin I must recruit myself with a can of ale."

The flagon being set before him, Sudall commenced his story:

The Legend of Malkin Tower.

"On the brow of a high hill forming part of the range of Pendle, and commanding an extensive view over the forest, and the wild and mountainous region around it, stands a stern solitary tower. Old as the Anglo-Saxons, and built as a stronghold by Wulstan, a Northumbrian thane, in the time of Edmund or Edred, it is circular in form and very lofty, and serves as a landmark to the country round. Placed high up in the building the door was formerly reached by a steep flight of stone steps, but these were removed some fifty or sixty years ago by Mother Demdike, and a ladder capable of being raised or let down at pleasure substituted for them, affording the only apparent means of entrance. The tower is otherwise inaccessible, the walls being of immense thickness, with no window lower than five-and-twenty feet from the ground, though it is thought there must be a secret outlet, for the old witch, when she wants to come forth, does not wait for the ladder to be let down. But this may be otherwise explained. Internally there are three floors, the lowest being placed on a level with the door, and this is the apartment chiefly occupied by the hag. In the centre of this room is a trap-door opening upon a deep vault, which forms the basement story of the structure, and which was once used as a dungeon, but is now tenanted, it is said, by a fiend, who can be summoned by the witch on

stamping her foot. Round the room, runs a gallery contrived in the thickness of the walls, while the upper chambers are gained by a secret staircase, and closed by moveable stones, the machinery of which is only known to the inmate of the tower. All the rooms are lighted by narrow loop-holes. Thus you will see that the fortress is still capable of sustaining a siege, and old Demdike has been heard to declare that she would hold it for a month against a hundred men. Hitherto it has proved impregnable.

"On the Norman invasion, Malkin Tower was held by Ughtred, a descendant of Wulstan, who kept possession of Pendle Forest and the hills around it, and successfully resisted the aggressions of the conquerors. His enemies affirmed he was assisted by a demon, whom he had propitiated by some fearful sacrifice made in the tower, and the notion seemed borne out by the success uniformly attending his conflicts. Ughtred's prowess was stained by cruelty and rapine. Merciless in the treatment of his captives, putting them to death by horrible tortures, or immuring them in the dark and noisome dungeon of his tower, he would hold his revels over their heads, and deride their groans. Heaps of treasure, obtained by pillage, were secured by him in the tower. From his frequent acts of treachery, and the many foul murders he perpetrated, Ughtred was styled the 'Scourge of the Normans.' For a long period he enjoyed complete immunity from punishment, but after the siege of York, and the defeat of the insurgents, his destruction was vowed by Ilbert de Lacy,

lord of Blackburnshire, and this fierce chieftain set fire to part of the forest in which the Saxon thane and his followers were concealed; drove them to Malkin Tower; took it after an obstinate and prolonged defence, and considerable loss to himself, and put them all to the sword, except the leader, whom he hanged from the top of his own fortress. In the dungeon were found many carcases, and the greater part of Ughtred's treasure served to enrich the victor.

"Once again, in the reign of Henry VI., Malkin Tower became a robber's stronghold, and gave protection to a freebooter named Blackburn, who, with a band of daring and desperate marauders, took advantage of the troubled state of the country, ravaged it far and wide, and committed unheard of atrocities, even levying contributions upon the Abbeys of Whalley and Salley, and the heads of these religious establishments were glad to make terms with him to save their herds and stores, the rather, that all attempts to dislodge him from his mountain fastness, and destroy his band, had failed. Blackburn seemed to enjoy the same kind of protection as Ughtred, and practised the same atrocities, torturing and imprisoning his captives unless they were heavily ransomed. He also led a life of wildest license, and, when not engaged in some predatory exploit, spent his time in carousing with his followers.

"Upon one occasion it chanced that he made a visit in disguise to Whalley Abbey, and passing the little hermitage near the church, beheld the votaress who

tenanted it. This was Isole de Heton. Ravished by her wondrous beauty, Blackburn soon found an opportunity of making his passion known to her, and his handsome though fierce lineaments pleasing her, he did not long sigh in vain. He frequently visited her in the garb of a Cistertian monk, and, being taken for one of the brethren, his conduct brought great scandal upon the abbey. The abandoned votaress bore him a daughter, and the infant was conveyed away by the lover, and placed under the care of a peasant's wife, at Barrowford. From that child sprung Bess Blackburn, the mother of old Demdike; so that the witch is a direct decendant of Isole de Heton.

"Notwithstanding all precautions, Isole's dark offence became known, and she would have paid the penalty of it at the stake, if she had not fled. In scaling Whalley Nab, in the woody heights of which she was to remain concealed till her lover could come to her, she fell from a rock, shattering her limbs, and disfiguring her features. Some say she was lamed for life, and became as hideous as she had heretofore been lovely; but this is erroneous, for apprehensive of such a result, attended by the loss of her lover, she invoked the powers of darkness, and proffered her soul in return for five years of unimpaired beauty.

"The compact was made, and when Blackburn came he found her more beautiful than ever. Enraptured, he conveyed her to Malkin Tower, and lived with her there

in security, laughing to scorn the menaces of Abbot Eccles, by whom he was excommunicated.

"Time went on, and as Isole's charms underwent no change, her lover's ardour continued unabated. Five years passed in guilty pleasures, and the last day of the allotted term arrived. No change was manifest in Isole's demeanour; neither remorse nor fear were exhibited by her. Never had she appeared more lovely —never in higher or more exuberant spirits. She besought her lover, who was still madly intoxicated by her infernal charms, to give a banquet that night to ten of his trustiest followers. He willingly assented, and bade them to the feast. They ate and drank merrily, and the gayest of the company was the lovely Isole. Her spirits seemed somewhat too wild even to Blackburn, but he did not check her, though surprised at the excessive liveliness and freedom of her sallies. Her eyes flashed like fire, and there was not a man present but was madly in love with her, and ready to dispute for her smiles with his captain.

"The wine flowed freely, and song and jest went on till midnight. When the hour struck, Isole filled a cup to the brim, and called upon them to pledge her. All arose, and drained their goblets enthusiastically. 'It was a farewell cup,' she said. 'I am going away with one of you.' 'How?' exclaimed Blackburn, in angry surprise. 'Let any one but touch your hand, and I will strike him dead at my feet.' The rest of the company regarded each other with surprise, and

it was then discovered that a stranger was amongst them; a tall dark man, whose looks were so terrible and demoniacal that no one dared lay hands upon him. 'I am come,' he said, with fearful significance, to Isole. 'And I am ready,' she answered, boldly. 'I will go with you were it to the bottomless pit,' cried Blackburn, catching hold of her. 'It is thither I am going,' she answered with a scream of laughter. 'I shall be glad of a companion.'

"When the paroxysm of laughter was over, she fell down on the floor. Her lover would have raised her, when what was his horror to find that he held in his arms an old woman, with frightfully disfigured features, and evidently in the agonies of death. She fixed one look upon him, and expired.

"Terrified by the occurrence the guests hurried away, and when they returned next day, they found Blackburn, stretched on the floor, and quite dead. They cast his body, together with that of the wretched Isole, into the vault beneath the room where they were lying, and then taking possession of his treasure, removed to some other retreat.

"Thenceforth, Malkin Tower became haunted. Though wholly deserted, lights were constantly seen shining from it at night, and sounds of wild revelry succeeded by shrieks and groans issued from it. The figure of Isole was often seen to come forth, and flit across the wastes in the direction of Whalley Abbey. On stormy nights a huge black cat, with flaming eyes,

was frequently descried on the summit of the structure, whence it obtained its name of Grimalkin, or Malkin Tower. The ill-omened pile ultimately came into the possession of the Nutter family, but it was never tenanted, until assigned, as I have already mentioned, to Mother Demdike."

The chirurgeon's marvellous story was listened to with great attention by his auditors. Most of them were familiar with different versions of it, but to Master Potts it was altogether new, and he made rapid notes of it, questioning the narrator as to one or two points which appeared to him to require explanation. Nicholas, as may be supposed, was particularly interested in that part of the legend, which referred to Isole de Heton. He now for the first time heard of her unhallowed intercourse with the freebooter Blackburn, of her compact on Whalley Nab with the fiend, of her mysterious connection with Malkin Tower, and of her being the ancestress of Mother Demdike. The consideration of all these points, coupled with a vivid recollection of his own strange adventure with the impious votaress at the Abbey on the previous night, plunged him into a deep train of thought, and he began seseriously to consider whether he might not have committed some heinous sin, and, indeed, jeopardised his soul's welfare by dancing with her. "What if I should share the same fate as the robber Blackburn," he ruminated "and be dragged to perdition by

her? It is a very awful reflection. But though my fate might operate as a warning to others, I am by no means anxious to be held up as a moral scarecrow. Rather let me take warning myself, amend my life, abandon intemperance, which leads to all manner of wickedness, and suffer myself no more to be ensnared by the wiles and delusions of the tempter in the form of a fair woman. No—no—I will alter and amend my life."

I regret, however, to say that these praiseworthy resolutions were but transient, and that the squire, quite forgetting that the work of reform, if intended to be really accomplished, ought to commence at once, and by no means be postponed till the morrow, yielded to the seductions of a fresh pottle of sack which was presented to him at the moment by Bess, and in taking it could not help squeezing the hand of the bouncing hostess, and gazing at her more tenderly than became a married man. Oh! Nicholas—Nicholas—the work of reform, I am afraid, proceeds very slowly and imperfectly with you. Your friend, Parson Dewhurst, would have told you that it is much easier to form good resolutions than to keep them.

Leaving the squire, however, to his cogitations and his sack, the attorney to his memorandum-book, in which he was still engaged in writing, and the others to their talk, we shall proceed to the chamber whither the poor miller had been led by Bess. When visited by the rector, he had been apparently soothed by the worthy man's consolatory advice, but when left alone he speedily relapsed into his former dark and gloomy state

of mind. He did not notice Bess, who, according to Holden's directions, placed the aqua-vitæ bottle before him, but as long as she stayed, remained with his face buried in his hands. As soon as she was gone he arose, and began to pace the room to and fro. The window was open, and he could hear the funeral bell tolling mournfully at intervals. Each recurrence of the dismal sound added sharpness and intensity to his grief. His sufferings became almost intolerable, and drove him to the very verge of despair and madness. If a weapon had been at hand, he might have seized it, and put a sudden period to his existence. His breast was a chaos of fierce and troubled thoughts, in which one black and terrible idea arose and overpowered all the rest. It was the desire of vengeance, deep and complete, upon her whom he looked upon as the murderess of his child. He cared not how it were accomplished so it were done, but such was the opinion he entertained of the old hag's power, that he doubted his ability to the task. Still, as the bell tolled on, the furies at his heart lashed and goaded him on, and yelled in his ear revenge—revenge. Now, indeed he was crazed with grief and rage; he tore off handfuls of hair, plunged his nails deeply into his breast, and while committing these and other wild excesses, with frantic imprecations, he called down Heaven's judgments on his own head. He was in that lost and helpless state when the enemy of mankind has power over man. Nor was the opportunity neglected, for when the wretched Baldwyn, who exhausted by the violence of his motions, had

leaned for a moment against the wall, he perceived to his surprise that there was a man in the room—a small personage attired in rusty black, whom he thought had been one of the party in the adjoining chamber.

There was an expression of mockery about this person's countenance which did not please the miller, and he asked him, sternly, what he wanted.

"Leave off grinnin, mon," he said, fiercely, "or ey may be tempted to tay yo be t' throttle, an may yo laugh o't wrong side o' your mouth."

"No, no, you will not, Richard Baldwyn, when you know my errand," replied the man. "You are thirsting for vengeance upon Mother Demdike. You shall have it."

"Eigh, eigh, you promised me vengeance efore," cried the miller—"vengeance by the law. Boh ey mun wait lung for it. Ey wad ha' it swift and sure—deep an deadly. Ey wad blast her wi' curses, os hoo blasted my poor Meary. Ey wad strike her deeod at my feet. That's my vengeance, mon."

"You shall have it," replied the other.

"Yo talk differently fro' what yo did just now, mon," said the miller, regarding him narrowly and distrustfully. "An yo look differently too. There's a queer glimmer abowt your een that ey didna notice efore, an that ey mislike."

The man laughed bitterly.

"Leave off grinnin' or begone," cried Baldwyn, furiously. And he raised his hand to strike the man, but he instantly dropped it, appalled by a look which the other threw at him. "Who the Dule are yo ?"

"The Dule must answer you, since you appeal to him," replied the other, with the same mocking smile; "but you are mistaken in supposing you have spoken to me before. He with whom you conversed in the other room, resembles me in more respects than one, but he does not possess power equal to mine. The law will not aid you against Mother Demdike. She will escape all the snares laid for her. But she will not escape *me*."

"Who are ye?" cried the miller, his hair erecting on his head, and cold damps breaking out upon his brow. "Yo are nah mortal, an nah good, to tawk i' this fashion."

"Heed not who and what I am," replied the other, "I am known here as a reeve of the forest—that is enough. Would you have vengeance on the murtheress of your child?"

"Yeigh," rejoined Baldwyn.

"And you are willing to pay for it at the price of your soul?" demanded the other, advancing towards him.

Baldwyn reeled. He saw at once the fearful peril in which he was placed, and averted his gaze from the scorching glance of the reeve.

At this moment the door was tried without, and the voice of Bess was heard, saying, "Who ha' yo got wi' yo, Ruchot; an whoy ha' yo fastened t' door?"

"Your answer?" demanded the reeve.

"Ey canna gi' it now," replied the miller. "Come in, Bess; come in."

"Ey conna," she replied. "Open t' door, mon."

"Your answer, I say ?" said the reeve.

"Gi' me an hour to think on't," said the miller.

"Agreed," replied the other. "I will be with you after the funeral."

And he sprang through the window, and disappeared before Baldwyn could open the door and admit Bess.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PERAMBULATION OF THE BOUNDARIES.

THE lane, along which Richard Assheton galloped, in pursuit of Mother Chattox, made so many turns, and was, moreover, so completely hemmed in by high banks and hedges, that he could see nothing on either side of him, and very little in advance; but, guided by the clatter of hoofs, he urged Merlin to his utmost speed, fancying he should soon come up with the fugitives. In this, however, he was deceived. The sound that had led him on became fainter and fainter, till at last it died away altogether; and on quitting the lane and gaining the moor, where the view was wholly uninterrupted, no traces either of witch or reeve could be discerned.

With a feeling of angry disappointment, Richard was about to turn back, when a large black greyhound came from out an adjoining clough, and made towards him. The singularity of the circumstance induced him to halt and regard the dog with attention. On nearing him, the animal looked wistfully in his face, and seemed to invite him to follow, and the

young man was so struck by the dog's manner that he complied, and had not gone far, when a hare, of unusual size and gray with age, bounded from beneath a gorse-bush, and speeded away, the grayhound starting in pursuit.

Aware of the prevailing notion that a witch most commonly assumed such a form when desirous of escaping, or performing some act of mischief, such as drying the milk of kine, Richard at once came to the conclusion that the hare could be no other than Mother Chattox, and without pausing to inquire what the hound could be, or why it should appear at such a singular and apparently fortunate juncture, he at once joined the run, and cheered on the dog with whoop and holloa.

Old as it was, apparently, the hare ran with extraordinary swiftness, clearing every stone wall and other impediment in the way, and more than once cunningly doubling upon its pursuers. But every feint and stratagem were defeated by the fleet and sagacious hound, and the hunted animal at length took to the open waste, where the run became so rapid, that Richard had enough to do to keep up with it, though Merlin, almost as furiously excited as his master, strained every sinew to the task.

In this way the chasers and the chased scoured the dark and heathy plain, skirting moss-pool, and clearing dyke, till they almost reached the butt-end of Pendle Hill, which rose like an impassable barrier before them. Hitherto, the chances had seemed in favour of the hare,

but they now began to turn, and as it seemed certain she must fall into the hound's jaws, Richard expected every moment to find her resume her natural form. The run having brought him within a quarter of a mile of Barley, the rude hovels composing which little booth were clearly discernible, the young man began to think the hag's dwelling must be among them, and that she was hurrying thither as to a place of refuge. But before this could be accomplished he hoped to effect her capture, and once more cheered on the hound, and plunged his spurs into Merlin's sides. An obstacle, however, occurred which he had not counted on. Directly in the course taken by the hare lay a deep, disused, limestone quarry, completely screened from view by a fringe of brush-wood. When within a few yards of this pit the hound made a dash at the flying hare, but eluding him, the latter sprang forward, and both went over the edge of the quarry together. Richard had well-nigh followed, and in that case would have been inevitably dashed in pieces; but, discovering the danger ere it was too late, by a powerful effort, which threw Merlin upon his haunches, he pulled him back on the very brink of the pit.

The young man shuddered as he gazed into the depths of the quarry, and saw the jagged points and heaps of broken stone that would have received him; but he looked in vain for the old witch, whose mangled body, together with that of the hound, he expected to behold; and he then asked himself whether the chase

might not have been a snare set for him by the hag and her familiar, with the intent of luring him to destruction. If so, he had been providentially preserved.

Quitting the pit, his first idea was to proceed to Barley, which was now only a few hundred yards off, to make inquiries respecting Mother Chattox, and ascertain whether she really dwelt there, but on further consideration he judged it best to return without further delay to Goldshaw, lest his friends, ignorant as to what had befallen him, might become alarmed on his account, but he resolved, as soon as he had disposed of the business in hand, to prosecute his search after the hag. Riding rapidly, he soon cleared the ground between the quarry and Goldshaw Lane, and was about to enter the latter, when the sound of voices, singing a funeral hymn, caught his ear, and, pausing to listen to it, he beheld a little procession, the meaning of which he readily comprehended, wending its slow and melancholy way in the same direction as himself. It was headed by four men in deep mourning, bearing upon their shoulders a small coffin, covered with a pall, and having a garland of white flowers in front of it. Behind them followed about a dozen young men and maidens, likewise in mourning, walking two and two, with gait and aspect of unfeigned affliction. Many of the women, though merely rustics, seemed to possess considerable personal attraction, but their features were in a great measure concealed by their large white kerchiefs disposed in the form of hoods. All carried sprigs

of rosemary and bunches of flowers in their hands. Plaintive was the hymn they sang, and their voices, though untaught, were sweet and touching, and went to the heart of the listener.

Much moved, Richard suffered the funeral procession to precede him along the deep and devious lane, and as it winded beneath the hedges, the sight was inexpressibly affecting. Fastening his horse to a tree, at the end of the lane, Richard followed on foot. Notice of the approach of the train having been given in the village, all the inhabitants flocked forth to meet it, and there was scarcely a dry eye among them. Arrived within a short distance of the church, the coffin was met by the minister attended by the clerk, behind whom came Roger Nowell, Nicholas, and the rest of the company from the hostel. With great difficulty poor Baldwyn could be brought to take his place as chief mourner. These arrangements completed, the body of the ill-fated girl was borne into the churchyard, the minister reading the solemn texts appointed for the occasion, and leading the way to the grave, beside which stood the sexton, together with the beadle of Goldshaw and Sparshot. The coffin was then laid on trestles, and amidst profound silence, broken only by the sobs of the mourners, the service was read, and preparations made for lowering the body into the grave.

Then it was that poor Baldwyn, with a wild, heart-piercing cry, flung himself upon the shell containing all that remained of his lost treasure, and could with diffi-

culty be removed from it by Bess and Sudall, both of whom were in attendance. The bunches of flowers and sprigs of rosemary having been laid upon the coffin by the maidens, amidst loud sobbing and audibly expressed lamentations from the bystanders, it was let down into the grave, and earth thrown over it.

Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust.

The ceremony was over, the mourners betook themselves to the little hostel, and the spectators slowly dispersed, but the bereaved father still lingered, unable to tear himself away. Leaning for support against the yew tree, he fiercely bade Bess, who would have led him home with her, begone. The kind-hearted hostess complied in appearance, but remained nigh at hand, though concealed from view.

Once more the dark cloud overshadowed the spirit of the wretched man—once more the same infernal desire of vengeance possessed him—once more he subjected himself to temptation. Striding to the foot of the grave he raised his hand, and with terrible imprecations vowed to lay the murtheress of his child as low as she herself was now laid. At that moment he felt an eye like a burning glass fixed upon him, and looking up beheld the reeve of the forest standing on the further side of the grave.

"Kneel down, and swear to be mine, and your wish shall be gratified," said the reeve.

Beside himself with grief and rage, Baldwyn would have complied, but he was arrested by a powerful grasp.

Fearing he was about to commit some rash act, Bess rushed forward and caught hold of his doublet.

"Bethink thee whot theaw has just heerd fro' t' minister, Ruchot," she cried, in a voice of solemn warning. "'Blessed are the dead that dee i' the Lord, for they rest fro their labours.' An again, 'Suffer us not at our last hour, for onny pains o' death to fa' fro thee.' Oh, Ruchot, dear, fo' the love theaw hadst fo' thy poor chilt, who is now delivert fro' the burthen o' th' flesh, an' dwellin' i' joy an felicity wi' God an his angels, dunna endanger thy precious sowl. Pray that theaw may'st depart hence i' th' Lord, wi' whom are the sowls of the faithful, an Meary's, ey trust, among the number. Pray that thy eend may be like hers."

"Ey conna pray, Bess," replied the miller, striking his breast. "The Lord has turned his feace fro' me."

"Becose thy heart is hardened, Ruchot," she replied. "Theaw'rt nourishin' nowt boh black an wicked thowts. Cast em off ye, I adjure thee, an come whoam wi' me."

Meanwhile, the reeve had sprung across the grave.

"Thy answer at once," he said, grasping the miller's arm, and breathing the words in his ears. "Vengeance is in thy power. A word, and it is thine."

The miller groaned bitterly. He was sorely tempted.

"What is that mon sayin' to thee, Ruchot?" inquired Bess.

"Dunna ax, boh tak me away," he answered. "Ey am lost else."

"Let him lay a finger on yo if he dare," said Bess, sturdily.

"Leave him alone—yo dunna knoa who he is," whispered the miller.

"Ey con partly guess," she rejoined; "boh ey care nother fo' mon nor dule when ey'm acting reetly. Come along wi' me, Ruchot."

"Fool!" cried the reeve, in the same low tone as before; "you will lose your revenge, but you will not escape me."

And he turned away, while Bess almost carried the trembling and enfeebled miller towards the hostel.

Roger Nowell and his friends had only waited the conclusion of the funeral to set forth, and their horses being in readiness, they mounted them on leaving the churchyard, and rode slowly along the lane leading towards Rough Lee. The melancholy scene they had witnessed, and the afflicting circumstances connected with it, had painfully affected the party, and little conversation occurred until they were overtaken by Parson Holden, who having been made acquainted with their errand by Nicholas, was desirous of accompanying them. Soon after this, also, the reeve of the forest joined them, and on seeing him, Richard sternly demanded why he had aided Mother Chattox in her flight from the churchyard, and what had become of her.

"You are entirely mistaken, sir," replied the reeve, with affected astonishment. "I have seen nothing

whatever of the old hag, and would rather lend a hand to her capture than abet her flight. I hold all witches in abhorrence, and Mother Chattox especially so."

"Your horse looks fresh enough, certainly," said Richard, somewhat shaken in his suspicions. "Where have you been during our stay at Goldshaw? You did not put up at the hostel?"

"I went to Farmer Johnson's," replied the reeve, "and you will find upon inquiry that my horse has not been out of his stables for the last hour. I myself have been loitering about Bess's grange and farmyard, as your grooms will testify, for they have seen me."

"Humph!" exclaimed Richard, "I suppose I must credit assertions made with such confidence, but I could have sworn I saw you ride off with the hag behind you."

"I hope I shall never be caught in such bad company, sir," replied the reeve, with a laugh. "If I ride off with any one it shall not be with an old witch, depend upon it."

Though by no means satisfied with the explanation, Richard was forced to be content with it; but he thought he would address a few more questions to the reeve.

"Have you any knowledge," he said, "when the boundaries of Pendle Forest were first settled and appointed?"

"The first perambulation was made by Henry de

Lacy, about the middle of the twelfth century," replied the reeve. "Pendle Forest, you may be aware, sir, is one of the four divisions of the great forest of Blackburnshire, of which the Lacys were lords, the three other divisions being Accrington, Trawden, and Rossendale, and it comprehends an extent of about twenty-five miles, part of which you have traversed to-day. At a later period, namely in 1311, after the death of another Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, the last of his line, and one of the bravest of Edward the First's barons, an inquisition was held in the forest, and it was subdivided into eleven vaccaries, one of which is the place to which you are bound, Rough Lee."

"The learned Sir Edward Coke defines a vaccary to signify a dairy," observed Potts.

"Here it means the farm and land as well," replied the reeve; "and the word 'booth,' which is in general use in this district, signifies the mansion erected upon such vaccary: Mistress Nutter's residence, for instance, being nothing more than the booth of Rough Lee: while a 'lawnd,' another local term, is a park inclosed within the forest, for the preservation of the deer, and the convenience of the chace, and of such inclosures we have two, namely, the Old and New Lawnd. By a commission in the reign of Henry VII., these vaccaries originally granted only to tenants at will, were converted into copyholds of inheritance, but—and here is a legal point for your consideration, Master Potts—as it seems very questionable

whether titles obtained under letters patent are secure, not unreasonable fears are entertained by the holders of the lands lest they should be seized, and appropriated by the crown."

"Ah! ah! an excellent idea, master reeve," exclaimed Potts, his little eyes twinkling with pleasure. "Our gracious and sagacious monarch would grasp at the suggestion, ay, and grasp at the lands too—ha! ha! Many thanks for the hint, good reeve. I will not fail to profit by it. If their titles are uncertain, the landholders would be glad to compromise the matter with the crown, even to the value of half their estates rather than lose the whole."

"Most assuredly they would," replied the reeve, "and furthermore they would pay the lawyer well, who could manage the matter adroitly for them. This would answer your purpose better than hunting up witches, Master Potts."

"One pursuit does not interfere with the other in the slightest degree, worthy reeve," observed Potts. "I cannot consent to give up my quest of the witches. My honour is concerned in their extermination. But to turn to Pendle Forest—the greater part of it has been disafforested, I presume ?"

"It has," replied the other—"and we are now in one of the purlieus."

"Pourallee is the better word, most excellent reeve," said Potts. "I tell you thus much because you appear to be a man of learning. Manwood, our great

authority in such matters, declares a pourallee to be 'a certain territory of ground adjoining unto the forest, mered and bounded with immoveable marks, meres, and boundaries, known by matter of record only.' And as it applies to the perambulation we are about to make, I may as well repeat what the same learned writer further saith touching marks, meres, and boundaries, and how they may be known. 'For, although,' he saith, 'a forest doth lie open and not inclosed with hedge, ditch, pale, or stone-wall, which some other inclosures have, yet in the eye and consideration of the law, the same hath as strong an inclosure by those marks, meres, and boundaries, as if there were a brick wall to encircle the same.' Marks, learned reeve, are deemed unremoveable—*primo*, *quia omnes metæ forestæ sunt integræ domino regi*—and those who take them away are punishable for the trespass at the assizes of the forest. *Secundo*, because the marks are things that cannot be stirred, as rivers, highways, hills, and the like. Now, such unremoveable marks, meres, and boundaries we have between the estate of my excellent client, Master Roger Nowell, and that of Mistress Nutter, so that the matter at issue will be easily decided."

A singular smile crossed the reeve's countenance, but he made no observation.

"Unless the lady can turn aside streams, remove hills, and pluck up huge trees, we shall win," pursued Potts, with a chuckle.

Again the reeve smiled, but he forebore to speak.

"You talk of marks, meres, and boundaries, Master Potts," remarked Richard. "Are not the words synonymous?"

"Not precisely so, sir," replied the attorney; "there is a slight difference in their signification, which I will explain to you. The words of the statute are '*metas, meras, et bundas,*' — now *meta,* or mark, is an object rising from the ground, as a church, a wall, or a tree; *mera,* or mere, is the space or interval between the forest and the land adjoining, whereupon the mark may chance to stand; and *bunda* is the boundary, lying on a level with the forest, as a river, a highway, a pool, or a bog."

"I comprehend the distinction," replied Richard. "And now as we are on this subject," he added to the reeve, "I would gladly know the precise nature of your office?"

"My duty," replied the other, "is to range daily throughout all the purlieus, or pourallees, as Master Potts more properly terms them, and disafforested lands, and inquire into all trespasses and offences against vert or venison, and present them at the king's next court of attachment or swainmote. It is also my business to drive into the forest such wild beasts as have strayed from it; to attend to the lawing and expeditation of mastiffs; and to raise hue and cry against any malefactors or trespassers within the forest."

"I will give you the exact words of the statute,"

said Potts—'*Si quis viderit malefactores infra metas forestæ, debet illos capere secundum posse suum, et si non possit, debet levare hutesium et clamorem.*' And the penalty for refusing to follow hue and cry is heavy fine."

"I would that that part of your duty relating to the hock-sinewing, and lawing of mastiffs, could be discontinued," said Richard. "I grieve to see a noble animal so mutilated."

"In Bowland Forest, as you are probably aware, sir," rejoined the reeve, "only the larger mastiffs are lamed, a small stirrup or gauge being kept by the master forester, Squire Robert Parker of Browsholme, and the dog whose foot will pass through it escapes mutilation."

"The practice is a cruel one, and I would it were abolished with some of our other barbarous forest laws," observed Richard.

While this conversation had been going on, the party had proceeded well on their way. For some time the road, which consisted of little more than tracks of wheels along the turf, led along a plain, thrown up into heathy hillocks, and then passing through a thicket, evidently part of the old forest, it brought them to the foot of a hill, which they mounted, and descended into another valley. Here they came upon Pendle Water and while skirting its banks, could see at a great depth below the river rushing over its rocky bed like an Alpine

torrent. The scenery had now begun to assume a savage and sombre character. The deep rift through which the river ran was evidently the result of some terrible convulsion of the earth, and the rocky strata were strangely and fantastically displayed. On the further side the banks rose up precipitously, consisting for the most part of bare cliffs, though now and then a tree would root itself in some crevice. Below this the stream sank over a wide shelf of rock, in a broad full cascade, and boiled and foamed in the stony basin that received it, after which, grown less impetuous, it ran tranquilly on for a couple of hundred yards, and was then artificially restrained by a dam, which diverting it in part from its course, caused it to turn the wheels of a mill. Here was the abode of the unfortunate Richard Baldwyn, and here had blossomed forth the fair flower so untimely gathered. An air of gloom hung over this once cheerful spot: its very beauty contributing to this saddening effect. The mill-race flowed swiftly and brightly on, but the wheel was stopped, windows and doors were closed, and death kept his grim holiday undisturbed. No one was to be seen about the premises, nor was any sound heard except the bark of the lonely watch-dog. Many a sorrowing glance was cast at this forlorn habitation, as the party rode past it, and many a sigh was heaved for the poor girl who had so lately been its pride and ornament; but if any one had noticed the bitter sneer curling the reeve's lip, or

caught the malignant fire gleaming in his eye, it would scarcely have been thought that he shared in the general regret.

After the cavalcade had passed the mill, one or two other cottages appeared on the near side of the river, while the opposite banks began to be clothed with timber. The glen became more and more contracted, and a stone bridge crossed the stream, near which, and on the same side of the river as the party, stood a cluster of cottages constituting the little village of Rough Lee.

On reaching the bridge, Mistress Nutter's habitation came in view, and it was pointed out by Nicholas to Potts, who contemplated it with much curiosity. In his eyes it seemed exactly adapted to its owner, and formed to hide dark and guilty deeds. It was a stern, sombre-looking mansion, built of a dark gray stone, with tall square chimneys, and windows with heavy mullions. High stone walls, hoary and moss-grown, ran round the gardens and courts, except on the side of the river, where there was a terrace overlooking the stream, and forming a pleasant summer's walk. At the back of the house were a few ancient oaks and sycamores, and in the gardens were some old clipped yews.

Part of this ancient mansion is still standing, and retains much of its original character, though subdivided and tenanted by several humble families. The garden is cut up into paddocks, and the approach environed by a labyrinth of low stone walls while miserable sheds and other buildings are appended to it; the terrace is wholly

obliterated; and the grange and offices are pulled down, but sufficient is still left of the place to give an idea of its pristine appearance and character. Its situation is striking and peculiar. In front rises a high hill, forming the last link of the chain of Pendle, and looking upon Barrowford and Colne, on the further side of which, and therefore not discernible from the mansion, stood Malkin Tower. At the period in question the lower part of this hill was well wooded, and washed by the Pendle Water, which swept past it through banks picturesque and beautiful, though not so bold and rocky as those in the neighbourhood of the mill. In the rear of the house the ground gradually rose for more than a quarter of a mile, when it obtained a considerable elevation. Following the course of the stream, and looking down the gorge, another hill appeared, so that the house was completely shut in by mountainous acclivities. In winter, when the snow lay on the heights, or when the mists hung upon them for weeks together, or descended in continuous rain, Rough Lee was sufficiently desolate, and seemed cut off from all communication with the outer world, but at the season when the party beheld it, though the approaches were rugged and difficult, and almost inaccessible except to the horseman or pedestrian, bidding defiance to any vehicle except of the strongest construction, still the place was not without a certain charm, mainly, however, derived from its seclusion. The scenery was stern and sombre, the hills were dark

and dreary, but the very wildness of the place was attractive, and the old house, with its gray walls, its lofty chimneys, its gardens with their clipped yews, and its rook-haunted trees, harmonised well with all around it.

As the party drew near the house, the gates were thrown open by an old porter with two other servants, who besought them to stay and partake of some refreshment, but Roger Nowell haughtily and peremptorily declined the invitation, and rode on, and the others, though some of them would fain have complied, followed him.

Scarcely were they gone, than James Device, who had been in the garden, issued from the gate, and speeded after them.

Passing through a close at the back of the mansion, and tracking a short narrow lane, edged by stone walls, the party, which had received some accessions from the cottages of Rough Lee, as well as from the huts on the hill side, again approached the river, and proceeded along its banks.

The new comers being all of them tenants of Mistress Nutter, and acting apparently under the directions of James Device, who had now joined the troop, stoutly and loudly maintained that the lady would be found right in the inquiry with the exception of one old man, named Henry Mitton; and he shook his head gravely when appealed to by Jem, and could by no efforts be induced to join him in the clamour.

Notwithstanding this demonstration, Roger Nowell and his legal adviser were both very sanguine as to the result of the survey being in their favour, and Master Potts, turned to ascertain from Sparshot, that the two plans, which had been rolled up and consigned to his custody, were quite safe.

Meanwhile, the party having followed the course of Pendle Water through the glen for about half a mile, during which they kept close to the brawling current, entered a little thicket, and then striking off on the left, passed over the foot of a hill, and came to the edge of a wide moor, where a halt was called by Nowell.

It being now announced that they were on the confines of the disputed property, preparations were immediately made for the survey ; the plans were taken out of a quiver, in which they had been carefully deposited by Sparshot, and handed to Potts, who giving one to Roger Nowell and the other to Nicholas, and opening his memorandum-book, declared that all was ready, and the two leaders rode slowly forward, while the rest of the troop followed, their curiosity being stimulated to the highest pitch.

Presently Roger Nowell again stopped, and pointed to a woody brake.

"We are now come," he said, "to a wood forming part of my property, and which, from an eruption caused by a spring that took place in it, many years ago, is called Burst Clough."

"Exactly, sir—exactly," cried Potts; "Burst Clough

—I have it here—landmarks, five gray stones, lying apart at a distance of one hundred yards or thereabouts, and giving you, sir, twenty acres of moor land. Is it not so, Master Nicholas? The marks are such as I have described, eh?"

"They are, sir," replied the squire; "with this slight difference in the allotment of the land—namely, that Mistress Nutter claims the twenty acres, while she assigns you only ten."

"Ten devils!" cried Roger Nowell, furiously. "Twenty acres are mine, and I will have them."

"To the proof, then," rejoined Nicholas. "The first of the gray stones is here."

"And the second on the left, in that hollow," said Roger Nowell. "Come on, my masters, come on."

"Ay, come on!" cried Nicholas; "this perambulation will be rare sport. Who wins, for a piece of gold, cousin Richard?"

"Nay, I will place no wager on the event," replied the young man.

"Well, as you please," cried the squire, "but I would lay five to one that Mistress Nutter beats the magistrate."

Meanwhile, the whole troop having set forward, they soon arrived at the second stone. Gray and moss-grown, it was deeply embedded in the soil, and to all appearance had rested undisturbed for many a year.

"You measure from the clough, I presume, sir?" remarked Potts to Nowell.

"To be sure," replied the magistrate, "but how is this?—This stone seems to me much nearer the clough than it used to be."

"Yeigh, so it dun, mester," observed old Mitton.

"It does not appear to have been disturbed, at all events," said Nicholas, dismounting and examining it.

"It would seem not," said Nowell—"and yet it certainly is not in its old place."

"Yo are mistaen, mester," observed Jem Device, "ey knoa th' lond weel, an this stoan has stood where it does fo' t' last twenty year. Ha'n't it, neeburs?"

"Yeigh—yeigh," responded several voices.

"Well, let us go on to the next stone," said Potts, looking rather blank.

Accordingly, they went forward, the hinds exchanging significant looks, and Roger Nowell and Nicholas carefully examining their respective maps.

"These land-marks exactly tally with my plan," said the squire, as they arrived at the third stone.

"But not with mine," said Nowell, "this stone ought to be two hundred yards to the right. Some trickery has been practised."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the squire, "these ponderous masses could never have been moved. Besides, there are several persons here who know every inch of the ground, and will give you their unbiassed testimony. What say you, my men? Are these the old boundary stones?"

All answered in the affirmative, except old Mitton, who still raised a dissenting voice.

"They be th' owd boundary marks, sure enough," he said, "boh they are neaw i' their owd places."

"It is quite clear that the twenty acres belong to Mistress Nutter," observed Nicholas, "and that you must content yourself with ten, Master Nowell. "Make an entry to that effect, Master Potts, unless you will have the ground measured."

"No, it is needless," replied the magistrate, sharply, "let us go on."

During this survey, some of the features of the country appeared changed to the rustics, but how or in what way they could not precisely tell, and they were easily induced by James Device to give their testimony in Mistress Nutter's favour.

A small rivulet was now reached, and another halt being called upon its sedgy banks, the plans were again consulted.

"What have we here, Master Potts—marks or boundaries?" inquired Richard, with a smile.

"Both," replied Potts, angrily. "This rivulet, which I take to be Moss Brook, is a boundary, and that sheepfold and the two posts standing in a line with it are marks. But hold! how is this?" he cried, regarding the plan in dismay, "the five acres of waste land should be on the left of the brook."

"It would doubtless suit Master Nowell better if it were so," said Nicholas, "but as they chance to be on the right, they belong to Mistress Nutter. I merely speak from the plan."

"Your plan is naught, sir," cried Nowell, furiously, "By what foul practice these changes have been wrought I pretend not to say, though I can give a good guess, but the audacious witch who has thus deluded me shall bitterly rue it."

"Hold, hold, Master Nowell," rejoined Nicholas, "I can make great allowance for your anger, which is natural considering your disappointment, but I will not permit such unwarrantable insinuations to be thrown out against Mistress Nutter. You agreed to abide by Sir Ralph Assheton's award, and you must not complain if it be made against you. Do you imagine that this stream can have changed its course in a single night; or that yon sheepfold has been removed to the further side of it?"

"I do," replied Nowell.

"And so do I," cried Potts; "it has been accomplished by the aid of——"

But feeling himself checked by a glance from the reeve, he stammered out, "of—of Mother Demdike."

"You declared just now that marks, meres, and boundaries, were unremoveable, Master Potts," said the reeve, with a sneer; "you have altered your opinion."

The crest-fallen attorney was dumb.

"Master Roger Nowell must find some better plea than the imputation of witchcraft to set aside Mistress Nutter's claim," observed Richard.

"Yeigh, that he mun," cried James Device, and the hinds who supported him.

The magistrate bit his lips with vexation.

"There is witchcraft in it, I repeat," he said.

"Yeigh, that there be," responded old Mitton.

But the words were scarcely uttered, when he was felled to the ground by the bludgeon of James Device.

"Ey'd sarve thee i' t' same way, fo' two pins," said Jem, regarding Potts with a savage look.

"No violence, Jem," cried Nicholas, authoritatively—"you do harm to the cause you would serve by your outrageous conduct."

"Beg pardon, squoire," replied Jem, "boh ey winna hear lies towd abowt Mistress Nutter."

"No one shan speak ill on her here," cried the hinds.

"Well, Master Nowell," said Nicholas, "are you willing to concede the matter at once, or will you pursue the investigation further?"

"I will ascertain the extent of the mischief done to me before I stop," rejoined the magistrate, angrily.

"Forward, then," cried Nicholas. "Our course now lies along this footpath, with a croft on the left, and an old barn on the right. Here the plans correspond, I believe, Master Potts?"

The attorney yielded a reluctant assent.

"There is next a small spring and trough on the right, and we then come to a limestone quarry—then

by a plantation called Cat Gallows Wood—so named because some troublesome mouser has been hanged there, I suppose, and next by a deep moss-pit, called Swallow Hole. All right, eh, Master Potts! We shall now enter upon Worston Moor, and come to the hut occupied by Jem Device, who can, it is presumed, speak positively as to its situation."

"Very true," cried Potts, as if struck by an idea. "Let the rascal step forward. I wish to put a few questions to him respecting his tenement. I think I shall catch him now," he added, in a low tone, to Nowell.

"Here ey be," cried Jem, stepping up with an insolent and defying look. "Whot d'ye want wi' me?"

"First of all I would caution you to speak the truth," commenced Potts, impressively, "as I shall take down your answers in my memorandum book, and they will be produced against you hereafter."

"If he utters a falsehood I will commit him," said Roger Rowell, sharply.

"Speak ceevilly, an ey win gi' yo a ceevil answer," rejoined Jem, in a surly tone; "boh ey'm nah to be brow-beaten."

"First, then, is your hut in sight?" asked Potts.

"Neaw," replied Jem.

"But you can point out its situation, I suppose?" pursued the attorney.

"Sartinly, ey con," replied Jem, without heeding a significant glance cast at him by the reeve. "It stonds

behint yon kloof, ot soide o' t' moor, wi' a rindle in front."

"Now mind what you say, sirrah," cried Potts. "You are quite sure the hut is behind the clough ; and the rindle, which, being interpreted from your base vernacular, I believe means a gutter, in front of it ?"

The reeve coughed slightly, but failed to attract Jem's attention, who replied quickly, that he was quite sure of the circumstances.

"Very well," said Potts—"you have all heard the answer. He is quite sure as to what he states. Now then, I suppose you can tell whether the hut looks to the north or the south ; whether the door opens to the moor or to the clough ; and whether there is a path leading from it to a spot called Hook Cliff ?"

At this moment Jem caught the eye of the reeve, and the look given him by the latter completely puzzled him.

"Ey dunna reetly recollect which way it looks," he answered.

"What ! you prevaricating rascal, do you pretend to say that you do not know which way your own dwelling stands," thundered Roger Nowell. "Speak out, sirrah, or Sparshot shall take you into custody at once."

"Ey'm ready, your worship," replied the beadle.

"Weel, then," said Jem, imperfectly comprehending the signs made to him by the reeve, "the hut looks nather to t' south naw to t' north, but to t' west ; it feaces t' moor; an there is a path fro' it to Hook Cliff."

As he finished speaking, he saw from the reeve's angry gestures that he had made a mistake, but it was now too late to recall his words. However, he determined to make an effort.

"Now ey bethink me, ey'm naw sure that ey'm reet," he said.

"You must be sure, sirrah," said Roger Nowell, bending his awful brows upon him. "You cannot be mistaken as to your own dwelling. Take down his description, Master Potts, and proceed with your interrogatories if you have any more to put to him."

"I wish to ask him whether he has been at home to-day," said Potts.

"Answer, fellow," thundered the magistrate.

Before replying, Jem would fain have consulted the reeve, but the latter had turned away in displeasure. Not knowing whether a lie would serve his turn, and fearing he might be contradicted by some of the bystanders, he said he had not been at home for two days, but had returned the night before at a late hour from Whalley, and had slept at Rough Lee.

"Then you cannot tell what changes may have taken place in your dwelling, during your absence?" said Potts.

"Of course not," replied Jem, "boh ey dunna see how ony chawnges con ha' happent i' so short a time."

"But I do, if you do not, sirrah," said Potts. "Be pleased to give me your plan, Master Nowell. I have a

further question to ask him," he added, after consulting it for a moment.

"Ey win awnser nowt more," replied Jem, gruffly.

"You will answer whatever questions Master Potts may put to you, or you are taken into custody," said the magistrate sternly.

Jem would have willingly beaten a retreat, but being surrounded by the two grooms and Sparshot, who only waited a sign from Nowell to secure him, or knock him down if he attempted to fly, he gave a surly intimation that he was ready to speak.

"You are aware that a dyke intersects the heath before us, namely, Worston Moor?" said Potts.

Jem nodded his head.

"I must request particular attention to your plan as I proceed, Master Nicholas," pursued the attorney. "I now wish to be informed by you, James Device, whether that dyke cuts through the middle of the moor, or traverses the side; and if so, which side? I desire also to be informed where it commences, and where it ends?"

Jem scratched his head, and reflected a moment.

"The matter does not require consideration, sirrah," cried Nowell. "I must have an instant answer."

"So yo shan," replied Jem; "weel, then, th' dyke begins near a little mound ca'd Turn Heaod, about a hundert yards fro' my dwellin', an' runs across th' easterly soide o't moor till it reaches Knowl Bottom."

"You will swear this?" cried Potts, scarcely able to conceal his satisfaction.

"Swere it! eigh," replied Jem.

"Eigh, we'n aw swere it," chorussed the hinds.

"I'm delighted to hear it," cried Potts, radiant with delight, "for your description corresponds exactly with Master Nowell's plan, and differs materially from that of Mistress Nutter, as Squire Nicholas Assheton will tell you."

"I cannot deny it," replied Nicholas, in some confusion.

"Ey should ha' said 'westerly' i'stead o' 'yeasterly,'" cried Jem, "boh yo puzzle a mon so wi' your lawyerly questins, that he dusna knoa his reet hond fro' his laft."

"Yeigh, yeigh, we aw meant to say 'yeasterly,'" added the hinds.

"You have sworn the contrary," cried Nowell. "Secure him," he added to the grooms and Sparshot, "and do not let him go till we have completed the survey. We will now see how far the reality corresponds with the description, and what further devilish tricks have been played with the property."

Upon this, the troop was again put in motion, James Device walking between the two grooms, with Sparshot behind him.

So wonderfully elated was Master Potts by the successful hit he had just made, and which, in his opinion, quite counterbalanced his previous failure, that he could not help communicating his satisfaction to Flint,

and this in such manner, that the fiery little animal, who had been for some time exceedingly tractable and good-natured, took umbrage at it, and threatened to dislodge him, if he did not desist from his vagaries—delivering the hint so clearly and unmistakeably that it was not lost upon his rider, who endeavoured to calm him down. In proportion as the attorney's spirits rose, those of James Device and his followers sank, for they felt they were caught in a snare, from which they could not easily escape.

By this time they had reached the borders of Worston Moor, which had been hitherto concealed by a piece of rising ground, covered with gorse and brush-wood, and Jem's hut, together with the clough, the rindle, and the dyke, came distinctly into view. The plans were again produced, and, on comparing them, it appeared that the various land-marks were precisely situated as laid down by Mistress Nutter, while their disposition was entirely at variance with James Device's statement.

Master Potts then rose in his stirrups, and calling for silence, addressed the assemblage.

"There stands the hut," he said, "and instead of being behind the clough, it is on one side of it, while the door certainly does *not* face the moor, neither is the rindle in front of the dwelling or near it; while the dyke, which is the main and important boundary line between the properties, runs above two hundred yards further west than formerly. Now, observe the original position of these marks, meres, and bounda-

ries—that is, of this hut, this clough, this rindle, and this dyke—exactly corresponds with the description given of them by the man Device, who dwells in the place, and who is, therefore, a person most likely to be accurately acquainted with the country; and yet, though he has only been absent two days, changes the most surprising have taken place—changes so surprising, indeed, that he scarcely knows the way to his own house, and certainly never could find the path which he has described as leading to Hook Cliff, since it is entirely obliterated. Observe, further, all these extraordinary and incomprehensible changes in the appearance of the country, and in the situation of the marks, meres, and boundaries, are favourable to Mistress Nutter, and give her the advantage she seeks over my honoured and honourable client. They are set down in Mistress Nutter's plan, it is true; but when, let me ask, was that plan prepared? In my opinion it was prepared first, and the changes in the land made after it by diabolical fraud and contrivance. I am sorry to have to declare this to you, Master Nicholas, and to you, Master Richard, but such is my firm conviction."

"And mine, also," added Nowell; "and I here charge Mistress Nutter with sorcery and witchcraft, and on my return I will immediately issue a warrant for her arrest. Sparshot, I command you to attach the person of James Device, for aiding and abetting her in her foul practices."

"I will help you to take charge of him," said the reeve, riding forward.

Probably this was done to give Jem a chance of escape, and if so, it was successful, for as the reeve pushed among his captors, and thrust Sparshot aside, the ruffian broke from them; and running with great swiftness across the moor, plunged into the clough, and disappeared.

Nicholas and Richard instantly gave chase, as did Master Potts, but the fugitive led them over the treacherous bog in such a manner as to baffle all pursuit. A second disaster here overtook the unlucky attorney, and damped him in his hour of triumph. Flint, who had apparently not forgotten or forgiven the joyous kicks he had recently received from the attorney's heels, came to a sudden halt by the side of the quagmire, and putting down his head, and flinging up his legs, cast him into it. While Potts was scrambling out, the animal galloped off in the direction of the clough, and had just reached it, when he was seized upon by James Device, who suddenly started from the covert, and vaulted upon his back.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROUGH LEE.

On returning from their unsuccessful pursuit of James Device, the two Asshetons found Roger Nowell haranguing the hinds, who on the flight of their leader would have taken to their heels likewise, if they had not been detained, partly by the energetic efforts of Sparshot and the grooms, and partly by the exhortations and menaces of the magistrate and Holden. As it was, two or three contrived to get away, and fled across the moor, whither the reeve pretended to pursue them; while those left behind were taken sharply to task by Roger Nowell.

"Listen to me," he cried, "and take good heed to what I say, for it concerns you nearly. Strange and dreadful things have come under my observation on my way hither. I have seen a whole village stricken as by a plague—a poor pedlar deprived of the use of his limbs and put in peril of his life—and a young maiden, once the pride and ornament of your own village, snatched from a fond father's care, and borne to an untimely grave.

These things I have seen with my own eyes, and I am resolved that the perpetrators of these enormities, Mothers Demdike and Chattox, shall be brought to justice. As to you, the deluded victims of the impious hags, I can easily understand why you shut your eyes to their evil doings. Terrified by their threats you submit to their exactions, and so become their slaves—slaves of the bond-slaves of Satan. What miserable servitude is this! By so doing you not only endanger the welfare of your souls, by leaguing with the enemies of Heaven, and render yourselves unworthy to be classed with a religious and Christian people, but you place your lives in jeopardy by becoming accessories to the crimes of those great offenders, and render yourselves liable to like punishment with them. Seeing, then, the imminency of the peril in which you stand, you will do well to avoid it while there is yet time. Nor is this your only risk. Your servitude to Mistress Nutter is equally perilous. What if she be owner of the land you till, and the flocks you tend! You owe her no fealty. She has forfeited all title to your service—and so far from aiding her, you ought to regard her as a great criminal, whom you are bound to bring to justice. I have now incontestable proofs of her dealing in the black art, and can show that by witchcraft she has altered the face of this country, with the intent to rob me of my land."

Holden now took up the theme. "The finger of Heaven is pointed against such robbery," he cried. "'Cursed is he,' saith the scripture, 'that removeth his

neighbour's landmark.' And again, it is written, 'Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.' Both these things hath Mistress Nutter done, and for both shall she incur divine vengeance."

"Neither shall she escape that of man," added Nowell, severely, "for our sovereign lord hath enacted that all persons employing or rewarding any evil spirit, shall be held guilty of felony, and shall suffer death. And death will be her portion, for such demoniacal agency most assuredly hath she employed."

The magistrate here paused for a moment to regard his audience, and reading in their terrified looks that his address had produced the desired impression, he continued with increased severity.

"These wicked women shall trouble the land no longer. They shall be arrested, and brought to judgment; and if you do not heartily bestir yourselves in their capture, and undertake to appear in evidence against them, you shall be held and dealt with as accessories in their crimes."

Upon this, the hinds, who were greatly alarmed, declared with one accord their willingness to act as the magistrate should direct.

"You do wisely," cried Potts, who by this time had made his way back to the assemblage, covered from head to foot with ooze as on his former misadventure. "Mistress Nutter and the two old hags who hold you in thrall would lead you to destruction. For understand it is the firm determination of my respected

client, Master Roger Nowell, as well as of myself, not to relax in our exertions till the whole of these pestilent witches who trouble the country be swept away, and to spare none who assist and uphold them."

The hinds stared aghast, for so grim was the appearance of the attorney, that they almost thought Hobthurst, the lubber-fiend, was addressing them.

At this moment, old Henry Mitton came up. He had partially recovered from the stunning effects of the blow dealt him by James Device, but his head was cut open, and his white locks were dabbled in blood. Pushing his way through the assemblage, he stood before the magistrate.

"If yo want a witness agen that foul murtheress and witch, Alice Nutter, ca' me, Master Roger Nowell," he said. "Ey con tay my Bible oath that the whole feace o' this keawntry has been chaunged sin yester neet, by her hondywark. Ca' me also to speak to her former life—to her intimacy wi' Mother Demdike an owd Chattox. Ca' me to me to prove her constant attendance at devils' sabbaths on Pendle Hill, and elsewhere, wi' other black and damning offences—an among 'em the murder, by witchcraft, o' her husband, Ruchot Nutter."

A thrill of horror pervaded the assemblage at this denunciation, and Master Potts, who was being cleansed from his sable stains by one of the grooms, cried out,

"This is the very man for us, my excellent client. Your name and abode, friend ?"

"Harry Mitton, o' Rough Lee," replied the old man. "Ey ha' dwelt there seventy year an uppards, an ha' known the feyther and granfeyther o' Ruchot Nutter, an' also Alice Nutter, when hoo war Alice Assheton. Ca' me, sir, an' aw' ye want to knoa ye shan larn."

"We will call you, my good friend," said Potts; "and if you have sustained any private wrongs from Mistress Nutter, they shall be amply redressed."

"Ey ha' endured much ot her honts," rejoined Mitton; "boh ey dunna speak o' mysel'. It be high time that Owd Scrat should ha' his claws clipt, an honest folk be allowed to live in peace."

"Very true, my worthy friend—very true," assented Potts.

An immediate return to Whalley was now proposed by Nowell, but Master Potts was of opinion that as they were in the neighbourhood of Malkin Tower they should proceed thither at once and effect the arrest of Mother Demdike, after which Mother Chattox could be sought out and secured. The presence of these two witches would be most important, he declared, in the examination of Mistress Nutter. Hue and cry for the fugitive James Device, ought also, to be made throughout the forest.

Confounded by what they heard, Richard and Nicholas had hitherto taken no part in the proceedings, but they now seconded Master Potts's proposition, hoping that the time occupied by the visit to Malkin Tower would prove serviceable to Mistress Nutter, for

they did not doubt that intelligence would be conveyed to her by some of her agents of Nowell's intention to arrest her.

Additional encouragement was given to the plan by the arrival of Richard Baldwyn, who at this juncture rode furiously up to the party.

"Weel, han yo settled your business here, Mester Nowell?" he asked, in breathless anxiety.

"We have so far settled it, that we have established proofs of witchcraft against Mistress Nutter," replied Nowell. "Can you speak to her character, Baldwyn?"

"Yeigh, that ey con," rejoined the miller, "an nowt good. Ey wish to see aw these mischeevous witches burnt; an that's why ey ha' ridden efter yo, Mester Nowell. Ey want your help os a magistrate agen Mother Demdike. Yo ha a constable wi' ye, and so can arrest her at wonst."

"You have come most opportunely, Baldwyn," observed Potts. "We were just considering whether we should go to Malkin Tower."

"Then decide upon 't," rejoined the miller, "or th' owd hag win escape ye. Tak her unaweares."

"I don't know that we shall take her unawares, Baldwyn," said Potts, "but I am decidedly of opinion that we should go thither without delay. Is Malkin Tower far off?"

"About a mile fro' Rough Lee," replied the miller. "Go back wi' me to't mill where yo con refresh yourselves, an ey'n get together some dozen o' my friends, an then we'n aw go up to't Tower together."

"A very good suggestion," said Potts; "and no doubt Master Nowell will accede to it."

"We have force enough already it appears to me," observed Nowell.

"I should think so," replied Richard. "Some dozen men, armed, against a poor defenceless old woman are surely enough."

"Owd, boh neaw defenceless, Mester Ruchot," rejoined Baldwyn. "Yo canna go i' too great force on an expedition like this. Malkin Tower is a varry strong place, os yo'n find."

"Well," said Nowell, "since we are here, I agree with Master Potts, that it would be better to secure these two offenders, and convey them to Whalley, where their examination can be taken at the same time with that of Mistress Nutter. We therefore accept your offer of refreshment, Baldwyn, as some of our party may stand in need of it, and will at once proceed to the mill."

"Well resolved, sir," said Potts.

"We'n tae th' owd witch, dead or alive," cried Baldwyn.

"Alive—we must have her alive, good Baldwyn," said Potts. "You must see her perish at the stake."

"Reet, mon," cried the miller, his eyes blazing with fury; "that's true vengeance. Ey'n ride whoam an get aw ready fo ye. Yo knoa t' road."

So saying, he struck spurs into his horse and galloped off. Scarcely was he gone, than the reeve, who had kept out of his sight, came forward.

"Since you have resolved upon going to Malkin Tower," he said, to Nowell, "and have a sufficiently numerous party for the purpose, my further attendance can be dispensed with. I will ride in search of James Device."

"Do so," replied the magistrate, "and let hue and cry be made after him."

"It shall be," replied the reeve, "and if taken he shall be conveyed to Whalley."

And he made towards the clough, as if with the intention of putting his words into execution.

Word was now given to set forward, and Master Potts having been accommodated with a horse by one of the grooms, who proceeded on foot, the party began to retrace their course to the mill.

They were soon again by the side of Pendle Water, and ere long reached Rough Lee. As they rode through the close at the back of the mansion, Roger Nowell halted for a moment, and observed, with a grim smile, to Richard—

"Never more shall Mistress Nutter enter that house. Within a week she shall be lodged in Lancaster Castle, as a felon of the darkest dye, and she shall meet a felon's fate. And not only shall she be sent thither, but all her partners in guilt—Mother Demdike and her accursed brood, the Devices; old Chattox and her grand-daughter, Nance Redferne; not one shall escape."

"You do not include Alizon Device in your list?" cried Richard.

"I include all—I will spare none," rejoined Nowell, sternly.

"Then I will move no further with you," said Richard.

"How!" cried Nowell, "are you an upholder of these witches. Beware what you do, young man. Beware how you take part with them. You will bring suspicion upon yourself, and get entangled in a net from which you will not easily escape."

"I care not what may happen to me," rejoined Richard, "I will never lend myself to gross injustice—such as you are about to practise. Since you announce your intention, of including the innocent with the guilty, of exterminating a whole family for the crimes of one or two of its members, I have done. You have made dark accusations against Mistress Nutter, but you have proved nothing. You assert that, by witchcraft, she has changed the features of your land, but in what way can you make good the charge? Old Mitton has, indeed, volunteered himself as a witness against her, and has accused her of most heinous offences, but he has at the same time shown that he is her enemy, and his testimony will be regarded with doubt. I will not believe her guilty on mere suspicion, and I deny that you have aught more to proceed upon."

"I shall not argue the point with you now, sir," replied Nowell, angrily. "Mistress Nutter will be fairly tried, and if I fail in my proofs against her, she will be

acquitted. But I have little fear of such a result," he added, with a sinister smile.

"You are confident, sir, because you know there would be every disposition to find her guilty," replied Richard. "She will not be fairly tried. All the prejudices of ignorance and superstition, heightened by the published opinions of the King, will be arrayed against her. Were she as free from crime, or thought of crime, as the new-born babe, once charged with the horrible and inexplicable offence of witchcraft, she would scarce escape. You go determined to destroy her."

"I will not deny it," said Roger Nowell, "and I am satisfied that I shall render good service to society by freeing it from so vile a member. So abhorrent is the crime of witchcraft, that were my own son suspected, I would be the first to deliver him to justice. Like a noxious and poisonous plant, the offence has taken deep root in this country, and is spreading its baneful influence around, so that if it be not extirpated, it may spring up anew, and cause incalculable mischief. But it shall now be effectually checked. Of the families I have mentioned, not one shall escape; and if Mistress Nutter herself had a daughter, she should be brought to judgment. In such cases, children must suffer for the sins of the parents."

"You have no regard then for their innocence?" said Richard, who felt as if a weight of calamity was crushing him down.

"Their innocence must be proved at the proper tri-

bunal," rejoined Nowell. "It is not for me to judge them."

"But you do judge them," cried Richard, sharply. "In making the charge you know that you pronounce the sentence of condemnation as well. This is why the humane man—why the just man would hesitate to bring an accusation—even where he suspected guilt—but where suspicion could not possibly attach, he would never suffer himself, however urged on by feelings of animosity, to injure the innocent."

"You ascribe most unworthy motives to me, young sir," rejoined Nowell, sternly. "I am influenced only by a desire to see justice administered, and I shall not swerve from my duty, because my humanity may be called in question by a love-sick boy. I understand why you plead thus warmly for these infamous persons. You are enthralled by the beauty of the young witch, Alizon Device. I noted how you were struck by her yesterday—and I heard what Sir Thomas Metcalfe said on the subject. But take heed what you do. You may jeopardise both soul and body in the indulgence of this fatal passion. Witchcraft is exercised in many ways. Its professors have not only power to maim and to kill, and to do other active mischief, but to ensnare the affections, and endanger the souls of their victims by enticing them to unhallowed love. Alizon Device is comely to view, no doubt, but who shall say whence her beauty is derived. Hell may have arrayed her in its fatal charms. Sin is beautiful, but all-destructive. And

the time will come when you may thank me for delivering you from the snares of this seductive syren."

Richard uttered an angry exclamation.

"Not now—I do not expect it—you are too much besotted by her," pursued Nowell; "but I conjure you to cast off this wicked and senseless passion, which, unless checked, will lead you to perdition. You have heard what abominable rites are practised at those unholy meetings, called Devil's Sabbaths, and how can you say that some demon may not be your rival in Alizon's love?"

"You pass all licence, sir," cried Richard, infuriated past endurance, "and if you do not instantly retract the infamous accusation you have made, neither your age nor your office shall protect you."

"I can, fortunately, protect myself, young man," replied Nowell, coldly; "and if aught were wanting to confirm my suspicions that you were under some evil influence, it would be supplied by your present conduct. You are bewitched by this girl."

"It is false!" cried Richard.

And he raised his hand against the magistrate, when Nicholas quickly interposed.

"Nay, cousin Dick," cried the squire, "this must not be. You must take other means of defending the poor girl, whose innocence I will maintain as stoutly as yourself. But, since Master Roger Nowell is resolved to proceed to extremities, I shall likewise take leave to retire."

"Your pardon, sir," rejoined Nowell, "you will not withdraw till I think fit. Master Richard Assheton, forgetful alike of the respect due to age and constituted authority, has ventured to raise his hand against me, for which, if I chose, I could place him in immediate arrest. But I have no such intention. On the contrary, I am willing to overlook the insult, attributing it to the frenzy by which he is possessed. But both he and you, Master Nicholas, are mistaken if you suppose I will permit you to retire. As a magistrate, in the exercise of my office, I call upon you both to aid me in the capture of the two notorious witches, Mothers Demdike and Chattox, and not to desist or depart from me till such capture be effected. You know the penalty of refusal."

"Heavy fine or imprisonment, at the option of the magistrate," remarked Potts.

"My cousin Nicholas will do as he pleases," observed Richard; "but, for my part, I will not stir a step further."

"Nor will I," added Nicholas, "unless I have Master Nowell's solemn pledge that he will take no proceedings against Alizon Device."

"You can give no such assurance, sir," whispered Potts, seeing that the magistrate wavered in his resolution.

"You must go, then," said Nowell, "and take the consequences of your refusal to act with me. Your relationship to Mistress Nutter will not tell in your favour."

"I understand the implied threat," said Nicholas, "and laugh at it. Richard, lad, I am with you. Let him catch the witches himself, if he can. I will not budge an inch further with him."

"Farewell, then, gentlemen," replied Roger Nowell, "I am sorry to part company with you thus, but when next we meet—" and he paused.

"We meet as enemies, I presume," supplied Nicholas.

"We meet no longer as friends," rejoined the magistrate, coldly.

With this, he moved forward, with the rest of the troop, while the two Asshetons after a moment's consultation, passed through a gate and made their way to the back of the mansion, where they found one or two men on the look-out, from whom they received intelligence, which induced them immediately to spring from their horses and hurry into the house.

Arrived at the principal entrance of the mansion, which was formed by large gates of open iron-work, admitting a view of the garden and front of the house, Roger Nowell again called a halt, and Master Potts, at his request, addressed the porter and two other serving-men who were standing in the garden in this fashion,—

"Pay attention to what I say to you, my men," he cried in a loud and authoritative voice—"a warrant will this day be issued for the arrest of Alice Nutter, of Rough Lee, in whose service you have hitherto dwelt, and who is

charged with the dreadful crime of witchcraft, and with invoking, consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, and rewarding evil spirits, contrary to the laws of God and man, and in express violation of his Majesty's statute. Now take notice, that if the said Alice Nutter shall at any time hereafter return to this her former abode, or take refuge within it, you are hereby bound to deliver her up forthwith to the nearest constable, to be by him brought before the worshipful Master Roger Nowell, of Read, in this county, so that she may be examined by him on these charges. You hear what I have said?"

The men exchanged significant glances, but made no reply.

Potts was about to address them, but to his surprise he saw the central door of the house thrown open, and Mistress Nutter issue from it. She marched slowly and majestically down the broad gravel walk towards the gate. The attorney could scarcely believe his eyes, and he exclaimed to the magistrate, with a chuckle—

"Who would have thought of this! We have her safe enough now. Ha! ha!"

But no corresponding smile played upon Nowell's hard lips. His gaze was fixed inquiringly upon the lady.

Another surprise. From the same door issued Alizon Device, escorted by Nicholas and Richard Assheton, who walked on either side of her, and the three fol-

lowed Mistress Nutter slowly down the broad walk. Such a display seemed to argue no want of confidence. Alizon did not look towards the group outside the gates, but seemed listening eagerly to what Richard was saying to her.

"Soh, Master Nowell," cried Mistress Nutter, boldly, "since you find yourself defeated in the claims you have made against my property, you are seeking to revenge yourself, I understand, by bringing charges against me, as false as they are calumnious. But I defy your malice, and can defend myself against your violence."

"If I could be astonished at any thing in you, madam, I should be at your audacity," rejoined Nowell, "but I am glad that you have presented yourself before me; for it was my fixed intention, on my return to Whalley, to cause your arrest, and your unexpected appearance here enables me to put my design into execution somewhat sooner than I anticipated."

Mistress Nutter laughed scornfully.

"Sparshot," vociferated Nowell, "enter those gates, and arrest the lady in the King's name."

The beadle looked irresolute. He did not like the task.

"The gates are fastened," cried Mistress Nutter.

"Force them open, then," roared Nowell, dismounting and shaking them furiously. "Bring me a heavy stone. By heaven! I will not be baulked of my prey."

"My servants are armed," cried Mistress Nutter, "and the first man who enters shall pay the penalty of his rashness with life. Bring me a petronel, Blackadder."

The order was promptly obeyed by the ill-favoured attendant, who was stationed near the gate.

"I am in earnest," said Mistress Nutter, arming the petronel, "and seldom miss my mark."

"Give attention to me, my men," cried Roger Nowell. "I charge you in the King's name to throw open the gate."

"And I charge you in mine to keep it fast," rejoined Mistress Nutter. "We shall see who will be obeyed."

One of the grooms now advanced with a large stone taken from an adjoining wall, which he threw with great force against the gates, but though it shook them violently, the fastenings continued firm. Blackadder and the two other serving-men, all of whom were armed with halberts, now advanced to the gates, and thrusting the points of their weapons through the bars, drove back those who were near them.

A short consultation now took place between Nowell and Potts, after which the latter, taking care to keep out of the reach of the halberts, thus delivered himself in a loud voice:—

"Alice Nutter, in order to avoid the serious consequences, which might ensue were the necessary measures taken to effect a forcible entrance into your habi-

tation, the worshipful Master Nowell has thought fit to grant you an hour's respite for reflection; at the expiration of which time he trusts that you, seeing the futility of resisting the law, will quietly yield yourself a prisoner. Otherwise, no further leniency will be shown you and those who may uphold you in your contumacy."

Mistress Nutter laughed loudly and contemptuously.

"At the same time," pursued Potts, on a suggestion from the magistrate, "Master Roger Nowell demands that Alizon Device, daughter of Elizabeth Device, whom he beholds in your company, and who is likewise suspected of witchcraft, be likewise delivered up to him."

"Aught more?" inquired Mistress Nutter.

"Only this," replied Potts, in a taunting tone, "the worshipful magistrate would offer a friendly counsel to Master Nicholas Assheton, and Master Richard Assheton, whom, to his infinite surprise, he perceives in a hostile position before him, that they in nowise interfere with his injunctions, but, on the contrary, lend their aid in furtherance of them, otherwise he may be compelled to adopt measures towards them, which must be a source of regret to him. I have furthermore to state, on the part of his worship, that strict watch will be kept at all the approaches of your house, and that no one, on any pretence whatever, during the appointed time of respite, will be suffered

to enter it, or depart from it. In an hour his worship will return."

"And in an hour he shall have my answer," replied Mistress Nutter, turning away.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW ROUGH LEE WAS DEFENDED BY NICHOLAS.

WHEN skies are darkest, and storms are gathering thickest overhead, the star of love will oft shine out with greatest brilliancy; and so, while Mistress Nutter was hurling defiance against her foes at the gate, and laughing their menaces to scorn—while those very foes were threatening Alizon's liberty and life—she had become wholly insensible to the peril environing her, and almost unconscious of any other presence save that of Richard, now her avowed lover—for, impelled by the irresistible violence of his feelings, the young man had chosen that moment, apparently so unpropitious, and so fraught with danger and alarm, for the declaration of his passion, and the offer of his life in her service. A few low-murmured words were all Alizon could utter in reply, but they were enough. They told Richard his passion was requited, and his devotion fully appreciated. Sweet were those moments to both—sweet, though sad. Like Alizon, her lover had become insensible to all around him. Engrossed by one thought

and one object, he was lost to aught else, and was only at last aroused to what was passing by the squire, who, having good-naturedly removed to a little distance from the pair, now gave utterance to a low whistle, to let them know that Mistress Nutter was coming towards them. The lady, however, did not stop, but motioning them to follow, entered the house.

"You have heard what has passed," she said. "In an hour Master Nowell threatens to return and arrest me and Alizon."

"That shall never be," cried Richard, with a passionate look at the young girl. "We will defend you with our lives."

"Much may be done in an hour," observed Nicholas to Mistress Nutter, "and my advice to you is to use the time allowed you in making good your retreat, so that when the hawks come back, they may find the doves flown."

"I have no intention of quitting my dove-cot," replied Mistress Nutter, with a bitter smile.

"Unless you are forcibly taken from it, I suppose," said the squire; "a contingency not impossible if you await Roger Nowell's return. This time, be assured, he will not go away empty handed."

"He may not go away at all," rejoined Mistress Nutter, sternly.

"Then you mean to make a determined resistance?" said Nicholas. "Recollect that you are resisting the law. I wish I could induce you to resort to the safer

expedient of flight. This affair is already dark and perplexed enough, and does not require further complication. Find any place of concealment, no matter where, till some arrangement can be made with Roger Nowell."

"I should rather urge you to fly, Nicholas," rejoined the lady, "for it is evident you have strong misgivings as to the justice of my cause, and would not willingly compromise yourself. I will not surrender to this magistrate, because, by so doing, my life would assuredly be forfeited, for my innocence could never be established before the iniquitous and bloody tribunal to which I should be brought. Neither, for the same reason, will I surrender Alizon, who, with a refinement of malignity, has been similarly accused. I shall now proceed to make preparations for my defence. Go, if you think fitting—or stay—but if you *do* stay, I shall calculate upon your active services."

"You may," replied the squire. "Whatever I may think, I admire your spirit, and will stand by you. But time is passing, and the foe will return and find us engaged in deliberation when we ought to be prepared. You have a dozen men on the premises on whom you can rely. Half of these must be placed at the back of the house, to prevent any entrance from being effected in that quarter. The rest can remain within the entrance hall, and be ready to rush forth when summoned by us, but we will not so summon them unless we are hardly put to it, and their aid is indispensable. All should be

well armed, but I trust they will not have to use their weapons. Are you agreed to this, madam ?"

"I am," replied Mistress Nutter, "and I will give instant directions that your wishes are complied with All approaches to the back of the house shall be strictly guarded as you direct, and my trusty man, Blackadder, on whose fidelity and courage I can entirely rely, shall take the command of the party in the hall, and act under your orders. Your prowess will not be unobserved, for Alizon and I shall be in the upper room commanding the garden, whence we can see all that takes place."

A slight smile was exchanged between the lovers, but it was evident from the anxious looks, that Alizon did not share in Richard's confidence. An opportunity, however, was presently afforded him of again endeavouring to re-assure her, for Mistress Nutter went forth to give Blackadder his orders, and Nicholas betook himself to the back of the house to ascertain, from personal inspection, its chance of security.

"You are still uneasy, dear Alizon," said Richard, taking her hand; "but do not be cast down. No harm shall befal you."

"It is not for myself I am apprehensive," she replied, "but for you, who are about to expose yourself to needless risk in this encounter ; and if any thing should happen to you, I shall be for ever wretched. I would far rather you left me to my fate."

"And can you think I would allow you to be borne

away a captive to ignominy and certain destruction?" cried Richard. "No, I will shed my heart's best blood before such a calamity shall occur."

"Alas!" said Alizon, "I have no means of requiting your devotion. All I can offer you in return is my love, and that I fear will prove fatal to you."

"Oh! do not say so," cried Richard. "Why should this sad presentiment still haunt you? I strove to chase it away just now, and hoped I had succeeded. You are dearer to me than life. Why, therefore, should I not risk it in your defence? And why should your love prove fatal to me?"

"I know not," replied Alizon, in a tone of deepest anguish, "but I feel as if my destiny were evil; and that, against my will, I shall drag those I most love on earth into the same dark gulf with myself. I have the greatest affection for your sister Dorothy, and yet I have been the unconscious instrument of injury to her. And you, too, Richard, who are yet dearer to me, are now put in peril on my account. I fear too, when you know my whole history, you will think of me as a thing of evil, and shun me."

"What mean you, Alizon?" he cried.

"Richard, I can have no secrets from you," she replied; "and though I was forbidden to tell you what I am now about to disclose, I will not withhold it. I was born in this house, and am daughter of its mistress."

"You tell me only what I guessed, Alizon," rejoined

the young man; "but I see nothing in this why I should shun you."

Alizon hid her face for a moment in her hands; and then looking up, said wildly and hurriedly, "Would I had never known the secret of my birth; or, knowing it, had never seen what I beheld last night!"

"What did you behold?" asked Richard, greatly agitated.

"Enough to convince me, that in gaining a mother I was lost myself," replied Alizon; "for oh! how can I survive the shock of telling you, I am bound by ties that can never be dissevered to one abandoned alike of God and man—who has devoted herself to the Fiend! Pity me, Richard—pity me, and shun me!"

There was a moment's dreadful pause, which the young man was unable to break.

"Was I not right in saying my love would be fatal to you?" continued Alizon. "Fly from me while you can, Richard. Fly from this house, or you are lost for ever!"

"Never, never! I will not stir without you," cried Richard. "Come with me, and escape all the dangers by which you are menaced, and leave your sinning parent to the doom she so richly merits."

"No, no; sinful though she be, she is still my mother. I cannot leave her," cried Alizon.

"If you stay, I stay, be the consequences what they may," replied the young man; "but you have ren-

dered my arm powerless by what you have told me. How can I defend one whom I know to be guilty ?"

"Therefore I urge you to fly," she rejoined.

"I can reconcile myself to it thus," said Richard—"in defending you, whom I know to be innocent, I cannot avoid defending her. The plea is not a good one, but it will suffice to allay my scruples of conscience."

At this moment Mistress Nutter entered the hall, followed by Blackadder, and three other men, armed with calivers.

"All is ready, Richard," she said, "and it wants but a few minutes of the appointed time. Perhaps you shrink from the task you have undertaken ?" she added, regarding him sharply; "if so, say so at once, and I will adopt my own line of defence."

"Nay, I shall be ready to go forth in a moment," rejoined the young man, glancing at Alizon. "Where is Nicholas ?"

"Here," replied the squire, clapping him on the shoulder. "All is secure at the back of the house, and the horses are coming round. We must mount at once."

Richard arose without a word.

"Blackadder will attend to your orders," said Mistress Nutter; "he only waits a sign from you to issue forth with his three companions, or to fire through the windows upon the aggressors, if you see occasion for it."

"I trust it will not come to such a pass," rejoined the squire; "a few blows from these weapons will convince them we are in earnest, and will, I hope, save further trouble."

And as he spoke he took down a couple of stout staves, and gave one of them to Richard.

"Farewell then, *preux chevaliers*," cried Mistress Nutter, with affected gaiety; "demean yourselves valiantly, and remember that bright eyes will be upon you. Now, Alizon, to our chamber."

Richard did not hazard a look at the young girl as she quitted the hall with her mother, but followed the squire mechanically into the garden, where they found the horses. Scarcely were they mounted than a loud hubbub, arising from the little village, proclaimed that their opponents had arrived, and presently after a large company of horse and foot appeared at the gate.

At sight of the large force brought against them the countenance of the squire lost its confident and jovial expression. He counted nearly forty men, each of whom was armed in some way or other, and began to fear the affair would terminate awkwardly, and entail unpleasant consequences upon himself and his cousin. He was, therefore, by no means at his ease. As to Richard, he did not dare to ask himself how things would end, neither did he know how to act. His mind was in utter confusion, and his breast oppressed as if by a nightmare. He cast one look towards the upper window, and beheld at it the white face of Mistress

Nutter, intently gazing at what was going forward, but Alizon was not to be seen.

Within the last half hour the sky had darkened, and a heavy cloud hung over the house, threatening a storm. Richard hoped it would come on fiercely and fast.

Meanwhile, Roger Nowell had dismounted and advanced to the gate.

"Gentlemen," he cried, addressing the two Asshetons; "I expected to find free access given to me and my followers, but as these gates are still barred against me, I call upon you, as loyal subjects of the King, not to resist or impede the course of law, but to throw them instantly open."

"You must unbar them yourself, Master Nowell," replied Nicholas. "We shall give you no help."

"Nor offer any opposition, I hope, sir?" said the magistrate, sternly.

"You are twenty to one or thereabout," returned the squire, with a laugh; "we shall stand a poor chance with you."

"But other defensive and offensive preparations have been made, I doubt not," said Nowell, "nay, I descry some armed men through the windows of the hall. Before coming to extremities, I will make a last appeal to you and your kinsman. I have granted Mrs. Nutter and the girl with her an hour's delay, in the hope that, seeing the futility of resistance, they would quietly surrender. But I find my clemency thrown away, and undue advantage taken of the time allowed for respite.

Therefore, I shall show them no further consideration. But to you, my friends, I would offer a last warning. Forget not that you are acting in direct opposition to the law; that we are here armed with full authority and power to carry out our intentions; and that all opposition on your part will be fruitless, and will be visited upon you hereafter with severe pains and penalties. Forget not, also, that your characters will be irrecoverably damaged from your connexion with parties charged with the heinous offence of witchcraft. Meddle not, therefore, in the matter, but go your ways, or if you would act as best becomes you, aid me in the arrest of the offenders."

"Master Roger Nowell," replied Nicholas, walking his horse slowly towards the gate, "as you have given me a caution, I will give you one in return; and that is to put a bridle on your tongue, when you address gentlemen, or, by my fay, you are likely to get answers little to your taste. You have said that our characters are likely to suffer in this transaction, but in my humble opinion they will not suffer so much as your own. The magistrate who uses the arm of the law for purposes of private vengeance, and who brings a false and foul charge against his enemy, knowing that it cannot be repelled, is not entitled to any particular respect or honour. Thus have you acted towards Mistress Nutter. Defeated by her in the boundary question, without leaving its decision to those to whom you had referred it, you instantly accuse her of witchcraft, and seek to

destroy her, as well as an innocent and unoffending girl by whom she is attended. Is such conduct worthy of you, or likely to redound to your credit? I think not. But this is not all. Aided by your crafty and unscrupulous ally, Master Potts, you get together a number of Mistress Nutter's tenants, and by threats and misrepresentations, induce them to become instruments of your vengeance. But when these misguided men come to know the truth of the case—when they learn that you have no proofs whatever against Mistress Nutter, and that you are influenced solely by animosity to her, they are quite as likely to desert you as to stand by you. At all events, we are determined to resist this unjust arrest, and, at the hazard of our lives, to oppose your entrance into the house."

Nowell and Potts were greatly exasperated by this speech, but they were little prepared for its consequences. Many of those who had been induced to accompany them, as has been shown, wavered in their resolution of acting against Mistress Nutter, but they now began to declare in her favour. In vain Potts repeated all his former arguments. They were no longer of any avail. Of the troop assembled at the gate more than half marched off, and shaped their course towards the rear of the house—with what intention it was easy to surmise—while of those who remained it was very doubtful whether the whole of them would act.

The result of his oration was quite as surprising to Nicholas as to his opponents, and enchanted by the effect of his eloquence, he could not help glancing up at the window, where he perceived Mistress Nutter, whose smiles showed that she was equally well pleased.

Seeing that if any further desertions took place his chances would be at an end, with a menacing gesture at the squire, Roger Nowell ordered the attack to commence immediately.

While some of his men, amongst whom were Baldwyn and old Mitton, battered against the gate with stones, another party, headed by Potts, scaled the walls, which, though of considerable height, presented no very serious obstacles in the way of active assailants. Elevated on the shoulders of Sparshot, Potts was soon on the summit of the wall, and was about to drop into the garden, when he heard a sound that caused him to suspend his intention.

"What are you about to do, cousin Nicholas?" inquired Richard, as the word of assault was given by the magistrate.

"Let loose Mistress Nutter's staghounds upon them," replied the squire. "They are kept in leash by a varlet stationed behind yon yew-tree hedge, who only awaits my signal to let them slip; and, by my faith, it is time he had it."

As he spoke, he applied a dog-whistle to his lips, and,

blowing a loud call, it was immediately answered by a savage barking, and half a dozen hounds, rough-haired, of prodigious size and power, resembling, in make, colour, and ferocity, the Irish wolfhound, bounded towards him.

"Aha!" exclaimed Nicholas, clapping his hands to encourage them: "we could have dispersed the whole rout with these assistants. Hyke, Tristam!—hyke, Hubert! Upon them!—upon them!"

It was the savage barking of the hounds that had caught the ears of the alarmed attorney, and made him desirous to scramble back again. But this was no such easy matter. Sparshot's broad shoulders were wanting to place his feet upon, and while he was bruising his knees against the roughened sides of the wall, in vain attempts to raise himself to the top of it unaided, Hubert's sharp teeth met in the calf of his leg, while those of Tristam were fixed in the skirts of his doublet, and penetrated deeply into the flesh that filled it. A terrific yell proclaimed the attorney's anguish and alarm, and he redoubled his efforts to escape. But, if before it was difficult to get up, the feat was now impossible. All he could do was to cling with desperate tenacity to the coping of the wall, for he made no doubt, if dragged down, he should be torn in pieces. Roaring lustily for help, he besought Nicholas to have compassion upon him, but the squire appeared little moved by his distress, and laughed heartily at his yells and vociferations.

"You will not come again on a like errand, in a hurry, I fancy, Master Potts," he said.

"I will not, good Master Nicholas," rejoined Potts; "for pity's sake call off these infernal hounds. They will rend me asunder as they would a fox."

"You were a cunning fox, in good sooth, to come hither," rejoined Nicholas, in a taunting tone; "but will you go hence if I liberate you?"

"I will—indeed I will," replied Potts.

"And will no more molest Mistress Nutter?" thundered Nicholas.

"Take heed what you promise," roared Nowell from the other side of the wall.

"If you do *not* promise it, the hounds shall pull you down, and make a meal of you!" cried Nicholas.

"I do—I swear—whatever you desire!" cried the terrified attorney.

The hounds were then called off by the squire, and, nerved by fright, Potts sprang upon the wall, and tumbled over it upon the other side, alighting upon the head of his respected and singular good client, whom he brought to the ground.

Meanwhile, all those unlucky persons who had succeeded in scaling the wall were attacked by the hounds, and, unable to stand against them, were chased round the garden, to the infinite amusement of the squire. Frightened to death, and unable otherwise to escape, for the gate allowed them no means of exit, the poor wretches fled toward the terrace overlooking Pendle

Water, and leaping into the stream, gained the opposite bank. There they were safe, for the hounds were not allowed to follow them further. In this way, the garden was completely cleared of the enemy, and Nicholas and Richard were left masters of the field.

Leaning out of the window, Mistress Nutter laughingly congratulated them on their success, and as no further disposition was manifested on the part of Nowell and such of his troop that remained to renew the attack, the contest, for the present at least, was supposed to be at an end.

By this time, also, intimation had been conveyed by the deserters from Nowell's troop, who, it will be remembered, had made their way to the back of the premises, that they were anxious to offer their services to Mistress Nutter ; and as soon as this was told her, she ordered them to be admitted, and descended to give them welcome. Thus things wore a promising aspect for the besieged, while the assailing party were proportionately disheartened.

Long ere this, Baldwyn and old Mitton had desisted from their attempts to break open the gate, and, indeed, rejoiced that such a barrier was interposed between them and the hounds, whose furious onslaughts they witnessed. A bolt was launched against these four-footed guardians of the premises by the bearer of the cross-bow, but the man proved but an indifferent marksman, for, instead of hitting the hound, he disabled one of his companions who was battling with him. Finding things

in this state, and that neither Nowell nor Potts returned to their charge, while their followers were withdrawn from before the gate, Nicholas thought he might fairly infer that a victory had been obtained. But like a prudent leader, he did not choose to expose himself till the enemy had absolutely yielded, and he therefore signed to Blackadder and his man to come forth from the hall. The order was obeyed, not only by them, but by the seceders from the hostile troop, and some thirty men issued from the principal door, and ranging themselves upon the lawn, set up a deafening and triumphant shout, very different from that raised by the same individuals when under the command of Nowell. At the same moment Mistress Nutter and Alizon appeared at the door, and at the sight of them the shouting was renewed.

The unexpected turn in affairs had not been without its effect upon Richard and Alizon, and tended to revive the spirits of both. The immediate danger by which they were threatened had vanished, and time was given for the consideration of new plans. Richard had been firmly resolved to take no further part in the affray than should be required for the protection of Alizon, and, consequently, it was no little satisfaction to him to reflect that the victory had been accomplished without him, and by means which could not afterwards be questioned.

Meanwhile, Mistress Nutter had joined Nicholas, and the gates being unbarred by Blackadder, they passed

through them. At a little distance stood Roger Nowell, now altogether abandoned, except by his own immediate followers, with Baldwyn and old Mitton. Poor Potts was lying on the ground, piteously bemoaning the lacerations his skin had undergone.

"Well, you have got the worst of it, Master Nowell," said Nicholas, as he and Mistress Nutter approached the discomfited magistrate, "and must own yourself fairly defeated."

"Defeated as I am, I would rather be in my place than in yours, sir," retorted Nowell, sourly.

"You have had a wholesome lesson read you, Master Nowell," said Mistress Nutter; "but I do not come hither to taunt you. I am quite satisfied with the victory I have obtained, and am anxious to put an end to the misunderstanding between us."

"I have no misunderstanding with you, madam," replied Nowell; "I do not quarrel with persons like you. But be assured, though you may escape now, a day of reckoning will come."

"Your chief cause of grievance against me, I am aware," replied Mistress Nutter, calmly, "is that I have beaten you in the matter of the land. Now, I have a proposal to make to you respecting it."

"I cannot listen to it," rejoined Nowell, sternly; "I can have no dealings with a witch."

At this moment his cloak was plucked behind by Potts, who looked at him as much as to say, "Do not exasperate her. Hear what she has got to offer."

"I shall be happy to act as mediator between you, if possible," observed Nicholas, "but in that case I must request you, Master Nowell, to abstain from any offensive language."

"What is it you have to propose to me, then, madam?" demanded the magistrate, gruffly.

"Come with me into the house, and you shall hear," replied Mistress Nutter.

Nowell was about to refuse peremptorily, when his cloak was again plucked by Potts, who whispered him to go.

"This is not a snare laid to entrap me, madam?" he said, regarding the lady suspiciously.

"I will answer for her good faith," interposed Nicholas.

Nowell still hesitated, but the counsel of his legal adviser was enforced by a heavy shower of rain, which just then began to descend upon them.

"You can take shelter beneath my roof," said Mistress Nutter; "and before the shower is over we can settle the matter."

"And my wounds can be dressed at the same time," said Potts, with a groan, "for they pain me sorely."

"Blackadder has a sovereign balsam, which, with a patch or two of diachylon, will make all right," replied Nicholas, unable to repress a laugh. "Here, lift him up between you," he added to the grooms, "and convey him into the house."

The orders were obeyed, and Mistress Nutter led the

way through the now wide-opened gates ; her slow and majestic march by no means accelerated by the drenching shower. What Roger Nowell's sensations were at following her in such a way, after his previous threats and boastings, may be easily conceived.

CHAPTER X.

ROGER NOWELL AND HIS DOUBLE.

THE magistrate was ushered by the lady into a small chamber, opening out of the entrance-hall, which, in consequence of having only one small narrow window, with a clipped yew-tree before it, was extremely dark and gloomy. The walls were covered with sombre tapestry, and on entering, Mistress Nutter not only carefully closed the door, but drew the arras before it, so as to prevent the possibility of their conversation being heard outside. These precautions taken, she motioned the magistrate to a chair, and seated herself opposite him.

"We can now deal unreservedly with each other, Master Nowell," she said, fixing her eyes steadily upon him; "and as our discourse cannot be overheard and repeated, may use perfect freedom of speech."

"I am glad of it," replied Nowell, "because it will save circumlocution, which I dislike, and, therefore, before proceeding further, I must tell you, directly and distinctly, that if there be aught of witchcraft in what

you are about to propose to me, I will have nought to do with it, and our conference may as well never begin ?"

"Then you really believe me to be a witch ?" said the lady.

"I do," replied Nowell, unflinchingly.

"Since you believe this, you must also believe that I have absolute power over you," rejoined Mistress Nutter, "and might strike you with sickness, cripple you, or kill you if I thought fit."

"I know not that," returned Nowell. "There are limits, even to the power of evil beings; and your charms and enchantments, however strong and baneful, may be wholly inoperative against a magistrate in the discharge of his duty. If it were not so, you would scarcely think it worth while to treat with me."

"Humph!" exclaimed the lady. "Now, tell me frankly what you will do when you depart hence ?"

"Ride off with the utmost speed to Whalley," replied Nowell, "and, acquainting Sir Ralph with all that has occurred, claim his assistance ; and then, with all the force we can jointly muster, return hither, and finish the work I have left undone."

"You will forego this intention," said Mistress Nutter, with a bitter smile.

The magistrate shook his head.

"I am not easily turned from my purpose," he remarked.

"But you have not yet quitted Rough Lee," said the lady, "and after such an announcement I shall scarce think of parting with you."

"You dare not detain me," replied Nowell. "I have Nicholas Assheton's word for my security, and I know he will not break it. Besides, you will gain nothing by my detention. My absence will soon be discovered, and if living I shall be set free; if dead, avenged."

"That may, or may not be," replied Mistress Nutter; "and in any case I can, if I choose, wreak my vengeance upon you. I am glad to have ascertained your intentions, for I now know how to treat with you. You shall not go hence, except on certain conditions. You have said you will proclaim me a witch, and will come back with sufficient force to accomplish my arrest. Instead of doing this, I advise you to return to Sir Ralph Assheton, and admit to him, that you find yourself in error in respect to the boundaries of the land——"

"Never," interrupted Nowell.

"I advise you to do this," pursued the lady, calmly, "and I advise you, also, on quitting this room, to retract all you have uttered to my prejudice, in the presence of Nicholas Assheton and other credible witnesses; in which case I will not only lay aside all feelings of animosity towards you, but will make over to

you the whole of the land under dispute, and that without purchase-money on your part."

Roger Nowell was of an avaricious nature, and caught at the bait.

"How, madam!" he cried, "the whole of the land mine without payment."

"The whole," she replied.

"If she should be arraigned and convicted it will be forfeited to the crown," thought Nowell; "the offer is tempting."

"Your attorney is here, and can prepare the conveyance at once," pursued Mistress Nutter, "a sum can be stated to lend a colour to the proceeding, and I will give you a private memorandum that I will not claim it. All I require is, that you clear me completely from the dark aspersions cast upon my character, and you abandon your projects against my adopted daughter, Alizon, as well as against those two poor old women, Mothers Demdike and Chattox."

"How can I be sure that I shall not be deluded in the matter?" asked Nowell, "the writing may disappear from the parchment you give me, or the parchment itself may turn to ashes. Such things have occurred in transactions with witches. Or it may be that by consenting to the compact I may emperil my own soul."

"Tush!" exclaimed Mistress Nutter; "these are idle fears. But it is no idle threat on my part, when I tell you you shall not go forth unless you consent."

"You cannot hinder me, woman," cried Nowell, rising.

"You shall see," rejoined the lady, making two or three rapid passes before him, which instantly stiffened his limbs, and deprived him of the power of motion. "Now stir if you can," she added with a laugh.

Nowell essayed to cry out, but his tongue refused its office. Hearing and sight, however, were left him, and he saw Mistress Nutter take a large volume, bound in black, from the shelf, and open it at a page covered with cabalistic characters, after which, she pronounced some words that sounded like an invocation.

As she concluded, the tapestry against the wall was raised, and from behind it appeared a figure in all respects resembling the magistrate : it had the same sharp features, the same keen eyes and bushy eyebrows, the same stoop in the shoulders, the same habiliments. It was, in short, his double.

Mistress Nutter regarded him with a look of triumph.

"Since you refuse, with my injunctions," she said, "your double will prove more tractable. He will go forth and do all I would have had you do, while I have but to stamp upon the floor and a dungeon will yawn beneath your feet, where you will lie immured till doomsday. The same fate will attend your crafty associate, Master Potts—so that neither of you will be missed—ha ! ha !"

The unfortunate magistrate fully comprehended his danger, but he could now neither offer remonstrance nor entreaty. What was passing in his breast seemed known to Mistress Nutter, for she motioned the double to stay, and touching the brow of Nowell with the point of her fore-finger, instantly restored his power of speech.

"I will give you a last chance," she said. "Will you obey me now ?"

"I must, perforce," replied Nowell; "the contest is too unequal."

"You may retire, then," she cried to the double. And stepping backwards, the figure lifted up the tapestry, and disappeared behind it.

"I can breathe, now that infernal being is gone," cried Nowell, sinking into the chair. "Oh! madam, you have indeed terrible power."

"You will do well not to brave it again," she rejoined. "Shall I summon Master Potts to prepare the conveyance ?"

"Oh ! no—no !" cried Nowell. "I do not desire the land. I will not have it. I should pay too dearly for it. Only let me get out of this horrible place !"

"Not so quickly, sir," rejoined Mistress Nutter. "Before you go hence, I must bind you to the performance of my injunctions. Pronounce these words after me,—'May I become subject to the Fiend if I fail in my promise.'"

"I will never utter them !" cried Nowell, shuddering.

"Then I shall recall your double," said the lady.

"Hold, hold !" exclaimed Nowell. "Let me know what you require of me."

"I require absolute silence on your part, as to all you have seen and heard here, and cessation of hostility, towards me and the persons I have already named," replied Mistress Nutter; "and I require a declaration from you, in the presence of the two Asshetons, that you are fully satisfied of the justice of my claims in respect to the land; and that, mortified by your defeat, you have brought a false charge against me, which you now sincerely regret. This I require from you; and you must ratify the promise by the abjuration I have proposed. 'May I become subject to the Fiend if I fail in my promise.'"

The magistrate repeated the words after her. As he finished, mocking laughter, apparently resounding from below, smote his ears.

"Enough !" cried Mistress Nutter, triumphantly; "and now take good heed that you swerve not in the slightest degree from your word, or you are for ever lost."

Again the mocking laughter was heard, and Nowell would have rushed forth, if Mistress Nutter had not withheld him.

"Stay !" she cried, "I have not done with you, yet!

My witnesses must hear your declaration. Remember!"

And placing her finger upon her lips, in token of silence, she stepped backwards, drew aside the tapestry, and opening the door, called to the two Asshetons, both of whom instantly came to her, and were not a little surprised to learn that all differences had been adjusted, and that Roger Nowell acknowledged himself entirely in error, retracting all the charges he had brought against her; while, on her part, she was fully satisfied with his explanations and apologies, and promised not to entertain any feelings of resentment towards him.

"You have made up the matter, indeed," cried Nicholas, "and, as Master Roger Nowell is a widower, perhaps a match may come of it. Such an arrangement"——

"This is no occasion for jesting, Nicholas," interrupted the lady, sharply.

"Nay, I but threw out a hint," rejoined the squire. "It would set the question of the land for ever at rest."

"It is set at rest—for ever," replied the lady, with a side look at the magistrate.

"'May I become subject to the Fiend if I fail in my promise,'" repeated Nowell to himself. "Those words bind me like a chain of iron. I must get out of this accursed house as fast as I can."

As if his thoughts had been divined by Mistress Nutter, she here observed to him, "To make our

reconciliation complete, Master Nowell, I must entreat you to pass the day with me. I will give you the best entertainment my house affords—nay, I will take no denial ; and you, too, Nicholas, and you, Richard, you will stay and keep the worthy magistrate company."

The two Asshetons willingly assented, but Roger Nowell would fain have been excused. A look, however, from his hostess enforced compliance.

"The proposal will be highly agreeable, I am sure, to Master Potts," remarked Nicholas, with a laugh ; "for, though much better, in consequence of the balsam applied by Blackadder, he is scarcely in condition for the saddle."

"I will warrant him well to-morrow morning," said Mistress Nutter.

"Where is he ?" inquired Nowell.

"In the library with Parson Holden," replied Nicholas ; "making himself as comfortable as circumstances will permit, with a flask of Rhenish before him."

"I will go to him, then," said Nowell.

"Take care what you say to him," observed Mistress Nutter, in a low tone, and raising her finger to her lips.

Heaving a deep sigh, the magistrate then repaired to the library, a small room panelled with black oak, and furnished with a few cases of ancient tomes. The attorney and the divine were seated at a table, with a big square-built bottle and long-stemmed glasses before them, and Master Potts, with a wry grimace, excused

himself from rising on his respected and singular good client's approach.

"Do not disturb yourself," said Nowell, gruffly; "we shall not leave Rough Lee to-day."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Potts, moving the cushions on his chair and eyeing the square-built bottle affectionately.

"Nor to-morrow, it may be—nor the day after—nor at all, possibly," said Nowell.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Potts, starting, and wincing with pain. "What is the meaning of all this, worthy sir?"

"'May I become the subject of the Fiend if I fail in my promise,'" rejoined Nowell, with a groan.

"What promise, worshipful sir?" cried Potts, staring with surprise.

The magistrate got out the words, "My promise to—" and then he stopped suddenly.

"To Mistress Nutter?" suggested Potts.

"Don't ask me," exclaimed Nowell, fiercely. "Don't draw any erroneous conclusions, man. I mean nothing—I say nothing!"

"He is certainly bewitched," observed Parson Holden in an undertone to the attorney.

"It was by your advice I entered this house," thundered Nowell, "and may all the ill arising from it alight upon your head!"

"My respected client!" implored Potts.

"I am no longer your client!" shrieked the infuri-

ated magistrate. "I dismiss you. I will have nought to do with you more. I wish I had never seen your ugly little face!"

"You were quite right, reverend sir," observed Potts aside to the divine; "he is certainly bewitched, or he never would behave in this way to his best friend. My excellent sir," he added, to Nowell, "I beseech you to calm yourself, and listen to me. My motive for wishing you to comply with Mistress Nutter's request was this: we were in a dilemma from which there was no escape, my wounded condition preventing me from flight, and all your followers being dispersed. Knowing your discretion, I apprehended that finding the tables turned against you, you would not desire to play a losing game, and I therefore counselled apparent submission as the best means of disarming your antagonist. Whatever arrangement you have made with Mistress Nutter is neither morally nor legally binding upon you."

"You think not!" cried Nowell. "'May I become subject to the Fiend if I violate my promise!'"

"What promise have you made, sir?" inquired Potts and Holden together.

"Do not question me," cried Nowell, "it is sufficient that I am tied and bound by it."

The attorney reflected a little, and then observed to Holden, "It is evident some unfair practices have been resorted to with our respected friend, to extort a promise from him which he cannot violate. It is

also possible, from what he let fall at first, that an attempt may be made to detain us prisoners within this house, and, for aught I know, Master Nowell may have given his word not to go forth without Mistress Nutter's permission. Under these circumstances, I would beg of you, reverend sir, as an especial favour to us both, to ride over to Whalley, and acquaint Sir Ralph Assheton with our situation."

As this suggestion was made, Nowell's countenance brightened up. The expression was not lost upon the attorney, who perceived he was on the right tack.

"Tell the worthy baronet," continued Potts, "that his old and esteemed friend, Master Roger Nowell, is in great jeopardy—am I not right, sir?"

The magistrate nodded.

"Tell him he is forcibly detained a prisoner, and requires sufficient force to effect his immediate liberation. Tell him, also, that Master Nowell charges Mistress Nutter with robbing him of his land by witchcraft."

"No, no," interrupted Nowell, "do not tell him that. I no longer charge her with it."

"Then, tell him that I do," cried Potts; "and that Master Nowell has strangely, very strangely, altered his mind."

"'May I become subject to the Fiend if I violate my promise!'" said the magistrate.

"Ay, tell him that," cried the attorney—"tell him the worthy gentleman is constantly repeating that sen-

tence. It will explain all. And now, reverend sir, let me entreat you to set out without delay, or your departure may be prevented."

"I will go at once," said Holden.

As he was about to quit the apartment, Mistress Nutter appeared at the door. Confusion was painted on the countenances of all three.

"Whither go you, sir?" demanded the lady sharply.

"On a mission which cannot be delayed, madam," replied Holden.

"You cannot quit my house at present," she rejoined, peremptorily. "These gentlemen stay to dine with me, and I cannot dispense with your company."

"My duty calls me hence," returned the divine. "With all thanks for your proferred hospitality, I must perforce decline it."

"Not when I command you to stay," she rejoined, raising her hand; "I am absolute mistress here."

"Not over the servants of heaven, madam," replied the divine, taking a Bible from his pocket, and placing it before him. "By this sacred volume I shield myself against your spells, and command you to let me pass."

And as he went forth, Mistress Nutter, unable to oppose him, shrank back.

CHAPTER XI.

MOTHER DEMDIKE.

THE heavy rain, which began to fall as Roger Nowell entered Rough Lee, had now ceased, and the sun shone forth again brilliantly, making the garden look so fresh and beautiful that Richard proposed a stroll within it to Alizon. The young girl seemed doubtful at first whether to comply with the invitation ; but she finally assented, and they went forth together alone, for Nicholas, fancying they could dispense with his company, only attended them as far as the door, where he remained looking after them, laughing to himself, and wondering how matters would end. "No good will come of it, I fear," mused the worthy squire, shaking his head, "and I am scarcely doing right in allowing Dick to entangle himself in this fashion. But where is the use of giving advice to a young man who is over head and ears in love? He will never listen to it, and will only resent interference. Dick must take his chance. I have already pointed out the danger to him, and if he chooses to run headlong into the pit, why, I cannot

hinder him. After all, I am not much surprised. Alizon's beauty is quite irresistible, and, were all smooth and straightforward in her history, there could be no reason why—pshaw! I am as foolish as the lad himself. Sir Richard Assheton, the proudest man in the shire, would disown his son if he married against his inclinations. No, my pretty youthful pair, since nothing but misery awaits you, I advise you to make the most of your brief season of happiness. I should certainly do so were the case my own."

Meanwhile, the objects of these ruminations had reached the terrace overlooking Pendle Water, and were pacing slowly backwards and forwards along it.

"One might be very happy in this sequestered spot, Alizon," observed Richard. "To some persons it might appear dull, but to me, if blest with you, it would be little short of Paradise."

"Alas! Richard," she replied, forcing a smile, "why conjure up visions of happiness which never can be realised? But even with you I do not think I could be happy here. There is something about the house which, when I first beheld it, filled me with unaccountable terror. Never since I was a mere infant have I been within it till to-day, and yet it was quite familiar to me—horribly familiar. I knew the hall in which we stood together, with its huge arched fireplace, and the armorial bearings upon it, and could point out the stone on which were carved my father's initials 'R. N.,' with the date '1572.' I knew the

tapestry on the walls, and the painted glass in the long range windows. I knew the old oak staircase, and the gallery beyond it, and the room to which my mother led me. I knew the portraits painted on the panels, and at once recognised my father. I knew the great carved oak bedstead in this room, and the high chimney-piece, and the raised hearthstone, and shuddered as I gazed at it. You will ask me how these things could be familiar to me? I will tell you. I had seen them repeatedly in my dreams. They have haunted me for years, but I only to-day knew they had an actual existence, or were in any way connected with my own history. The sight of that house inspired me with a horror I have not been able to overcome; and I have a presentiment that some ill will befal me within it. I would never willingly dwell there."

"The warning voice within you, which should never be despised, prompts you to quit it," cried Richard; "and I also urge you in like manner."

"In vain," sighed Alizon. "This terrace is beautiful," she added, as they resumed their walk, "and I shall often come hither, if I am permitted. At sunset, this river, and the woody heights above it, must be enchanting; and I do not dislike the savage character of the surrounding scenery. It enhances, by contrast, the beauty of this solitude. I only wish the spot commanded a view of Pendle Hill."

"You are like my cousin Nicholas, who thinks no prospect complete unless that hill forms part of it,"

said Richard; "but since I find that you will often come hither at sunset, I shall not despair of seeing and conversing with you again, even if I am forbidden the house by Mistress Nutter. That thicket is an excellent hiding-place, and this stream is easily crossed."

"We can have no secret interviews, Richard," replied Alizon; "I shall come hither to think of you, but not to meet you. You must never return to Rough Lee again—that is, not unless some change takes place, which I dare not anticipate—but, hist! I am called. I must go back to the house."

"The voice came from the other side of the river," said Richard—"and, hark! it calls again. Who can it be?"

"It is Jennet," replied Alizon, "I see her now."

And she pointed out the little girl standing beside an alder on the opposite bank.

"Yo didna notice me efore, Alizon," cried Jennet in her sharp tones, and with her customary provoking laugh, "boh ey seed yo plain enuff, an heer'd yo too; and ey heer'd Mester Ruchot say he wad hide i' this thicket, an cross the river to meet ye at sunset. Little pigs, they say, ha' lang ears, an mine werena gi'en me fo' nowt."

"They have somewhat misinformed you in this instance," replied Alizon, "but how, in the name of wonder, did you come here?"

"Varry easily," replied Jennet, "boh ey hanna time to tell ye now. Granny Demdike has sent me hither

wi' a message to ye and Mistress Nutter. Boh may be, ye winna loike Mester Ruchot to hear what ey ha' getten to tell ye."

"I will leave you," said Richard, about to depart.

"Oh! no, no!" cried Alizon, "she can have nothing to say which you may not hear."

"Shan ey go back to Granny Demdike, an tell her yo're too proud to receive her message?" asked the child.

"On no account," whispered Richard. "Do not let her anger the old hag."

"Speak, Jennet," said Alizon, in a tone of kind persuasion.

"Ey shanna speak onless yo cum ower t' wetur to me," replied the little girl; "an whot ey ha to tell consarns ye mitch."

"I can easily cross," observed Alizon to Richard. "Those stones seem placed on purpose."

Upon this, descending from the terrace to the river's brink, and springing lightly upon the first stone which reared its head above the foaming tide, she bounded to another, and so in an instant was across the stream. Richard saw her ascend the opposite bank, and approach Jennet, who withdrew behind the alder; and then he fancied he perceived an old beldame, partly concealed by the intervening branches of the tree, advance and seize hold of her. Then there was a scream; and the sound had scarcely reached the young man's ears before he was down the bank and across the river, but when he reached

the alder, neither Alizon, nor Jennet, nor the old beldame were to be seen.

The terrible conviction that she had been carried off by Mother Demdike then smote him, and though he continued his search for her among the adjoining bushes, it was with fearful misgivings. No answer was returned to his shouts, nor could he discover any trace of the means by which Alizon had been spirited away.

After some time spent in ineffectual search, uncertain what course to pursue, and with a heart full of despair, Richard crossed the river, and proceeded towards the house, in front of which he found Mistress Nutter and Nicholas, both of whom seemed surprised when they perceived he was unaccompanied by Alizon. The lady immediately, and somewhat sharply, questioned him as to what had become of her adopted daughter, and appeared at first to doubt his answer; but at length, unable to question his sincerity, she became violently agitated.

"The poor girl has been conveyed away by Mother Demdike," she cried, "though for what purpose I am at a loss to conceive. The old hag could not cross the running water, and therefore resorted to that stratagem."

"Alizon must not be left in her hands, madam," said Richard.

"She must not," replied the lady. "If Blackadder, whom I have sent after Parson Holden, were here, I would despatch him instantly to Malkin Tower."

"I will go instead," said Richard.

"You had better accept his offer," interposed Nicholas; "he will serve you as well as Blackadder."

"Go I shall, madam," cried Richard; "if not on your account, on my own."

"Come, then, with me," said the lady, entering the house, "and I will furnish you with that which shall be your safeguard in the enterprise."

With this, she proceeded to the closet where her interview with Roger Nowell had been held; and, unlocking an ebony cabinet, took from a drawer within it a small flat piece of gold, graven with mystic characters, and having a slender chain of the same metal attached to it. Throwing the chain over Richard's neck, she said, "Place this talisman, which is of sovereign virtue, near your heart, and no witchcraft shall have power over you. But be careful that you are not by any artifice deprived of it, for the old hag will soon discover that you possess some charm to protect you against her spells. You are impatient to be gone, but I have not yet done," she continued, taking down a small silver bugle from a hook, and giving it him. "On reaching Malkin Tower wind this horn thrice, and the old witch will appear at the upper window. Demand admittance in my name, and she will not dare to refuse you; or, if she does, tell her you know the secret entrance to her stronghold, and will have recourse to it. And in case this should be needful, I will now disclose it to you, but you must not use it till other means fail.

When opposite the door, which you will find is high up in the building, take ten paces to the left, and if you examine the masonry at the foot of the tower, you will perceive one stone somewhat darker than the rest. At the bottom of this stone, and concealed by a patch of heath, you will discover a knob of iron. Touch it, and it will give you an opening to a vaulted chamber, whence you can mount to the upper room. Even then you may experience some difficulty, but with resolution you will surmount all obstacles."

"I have no fear of success, madam," replied Richard, confidently.

And quitting her, he proceeded to the stables, and calling for his horse, vaulted into the saddle, and galloped off towards the bridge.

Fast as Richard rode up the steep hill side, still faster did the black clouds gather over his head. No natural cause could have produced so instantaneous a change in the aspect of the sky, and the young man viewed it with uneasiness, and wished to get out of the thicket in which he was now involved before the threatened thunderstorm commenced. But the hill was steep, and the road bad, being full of loose stones, and crossed in many places by bare roots of trees. Though ordinarily sure-footed, Merlin stumbled frequently, and Richard was obliged to slacken his pace. It grew darker and darker, and the storm seemed ready to burst upon him. The smaller birds ceased singing, and screened themselves under the thickest foliage; the

pie chattered incessantly; the jay screamed; the bittern flew past booming heavily in the air; the raven croaked; the heron arose from the river and speeded off with his long neck stretched out; and the falcon, who had been hovering over him, swooped sidelong down and sought shelter beneath an impending rock; the rabbit scudded off to his burrow in the brake; and the hare, erecting himself for a moment, as if to listen to the note of danger, crept timorously off into the long dry grass.

It grew so dark at last that the road was difficult to discern, and the dense rows of trees on either side assumed a fantastic appearance in the deep gloom. Richard was now more than half-way up the hill, and the thicket had become more tangled and intricate, and the road narrower and more rugged. All at once Merlin stopped, quivering in every limb, as if in extremity of terror.

Before the rider, and right in his path, glared a pair of red fiery orbs, with something dusky and obscure linked to them; but whether of man or beast he could not distinguish.

Richard called to it. No answer. He struck spurs into the reeking flanks of his horse. The animal refused to stir. Just then there was a moaning sound in the wood, as of some one in pain. He turned in the direction, shouted, but received no answer. When he looked back the red eyes were gone.

Then Merlin moved forward of his own accord, but

ere he had gone far, the eyes were visible again, glaring at the rider from the wood. This time they approached, dilating, and increasing in glowing intensity, till they scorched him like burning glasses. Bethinking him of the talisman, Richard drew it forth. The light was instantly extinguished, and the indistinct figure accompanying it melted into darkness.

Once more Merlin resumed his toilsome way, and Richard was marvelling that the storm so long suspended its fury, when the sky was riven by a sudden blaze, and a crackling bolt shot down and struck the earth at his feet. The affrighted steed reared aloft, and was with difficulty prevented from falling backwards upon his rider. Almost before he could be brought to his feet, an awful peal of thunder burst over head, and it required Richard's utmost efforts to prevent him from rushing madly down the hill.

The storm had now fairly commenced. Flash followed flash, and peal succeeded peal without intermission. The rain descended hissing and spouting, and presently ran down the hill in a torrent, adding to the horseman's other difficulties and dangers. To heighten the terror of the scene, strange shapes, revealed by the lightning, were seen flitting among the trees, and strange sounds were heard, though overpowered by the dreadful rolling of the thunder.

But Richard's resolution continued unshaken, and he forced Merlin on. He had not proceeded far, however, when the animal uttered a cry of fright, and began beat-

ing the air with his fore hoofs. The lightning enabled Richard to discern the cause of this new distress. Coiled round the poor beast's legs, all whose efforts to disengage himself from the terrible assailant were ineffectual, was a large black snake, seemingly about to plunge its poisonous fangs into the flesh. Again having recourse to the talisman, and bending down, Richard stretched it towards the snake, upon which the reptile instantly darted its arrow-shaped head against him, but instead of wounding him, its forked teeth encountered the piece of gold, and as if stricken a violent blow, it swiftly untwined itself, and fled, hissing, into the thicket.

Richard was now obliged to dismount and lead his horse. In this way he toiled slowly up the hill. The storm continued with unabated fury: the red lightning played around him, the brattling thunder stunned him, and the pelting rain poured down upon his head. But he was no more molested. Save for the vivid flashes, it had become dark as night, but they served to guide him on his way.

At length he got out of the thicket, and trod upon the turf, but it was rendered so slippery by moisture, that he could scarcely keep his feet, while the lightning no longer aided him. Fearing he had taken a wrong course, he stood still, and while debating with himself a blaze of light illumined the wide heath, and showed him the object of his search, Malkin Tower, standing alone, like a beacon, at about a quarter of a mile's distance, on the further side of the hill. Was it disturbed fancy, or did he really behold on the summit

of the structure a grisly shape resembling—if it resembled any thing human—a gigantic black cat, with roughened staring skin, and flaming eye-balls.

Nerved by the sight of the tower, Richard was on his steed's back in an instant, and the animal, having in some degree recovered his spirits, galloped off with him, and kept his feet, in spite of the slippery state of the road. Ere long, another flash showed the young man that he was drawing rapidly near the tower, and dismounting, he tied Merlin to a tree, and hurried towards the unhallowed pile. When within twenty paces of it, mindful of Mistress Nutter's injunctions, he placed the bugle to his lips, and winded it thrice. The summons, though clear and loud, sounded strangely in the portentous silence.

Scarcely had the last notes died away, when a light shone through the dark red curtains hanging before a casement in the upper part of the tower. The next moment, these were drawn aside, and a face appeared, so frightful, so charged with infernal wickedness and malice, that Richard's blood grew chill at the sight. Was it man or woman? The white beard and the large, broad, masculine character of the countenance seemed to denote the former, but the garb was that of a female. The face was at once hideous and fantastic—the eyes set across—the mouth awry—the right cheek marked by a mole shining with black hair, and horrible from its contrast to the rest of the visage, and the brow branded as if by a streak of blood. A black thrum cap constituted the old witch's head-gear, and from beneath it

her hoary hair escaped in long elf-locks. The lower part of her person was hidden from view, but she appeared to be as broad-shouldered as a man, and her bulky person was wrapped in a tawny-coloured robe. Throwing open the window, she looked forth, and demanded, in harsh, imperious tones,—

"Who dares to summon Mother Demdike?"

"A messenger from Mistress Nutter," replied Richard. "I am come in her name to demand the restitution of Alizon Device, whom thou hast forcibly and wrongfully taken from her."

"Alizon Device is my granddaughter, and, as such, belongs to me, and not to Mistress Nutter," rejoined Mother Demdike.

"Thou knowest thou speakest false, foul hag," cried Richard. "Alizon is no blood of thine. Open the door and cast down the ladder, or I will find other means of entrance."

"Try them, then," rejoined Mother Demdike. And she closed the casement sharply, and drew the curtains over it.

After reconnoitering the building for a moment, Richard moved quickly to the left, and counting ten paces, as directed by Mistress Nutter, began to search among the thick grass growing near the base of the tower for the concealed entrance. It was too dark to distinguish any difference in the colour of the masonry, but he was sure he could not be far wrong, and presently his hand came in contact with a knob of iron.

He pressed it, but it did not yield to the touch. Again more forcibly, but with like ill success. Could he be mistaken? He tried the next stone, and discovered another knob upon it, but this was as immoveable as the first. He went on, and then found that each stone was alike, and that if amongst the number he had chanced upon the one worked by the secret spring, it had refused to act. On examining the structure so far as he was able to do in the gloom, he found he had described the whole circle of the tower, and was about to commence the search anew, when a creaking sound was heard above, and a light streamed suddenly down upon him. The door had been opened by the old witch, and she stood there with a lamp in her hand, its yellow flame illumining her hideous visage and short, square, powerfully-built frame. Her throat was like that of a bull; her hands of extraordinary size; and her arms, which were bare to the shoulder, brawny and muscular.

"What, still outside?" she cried, in a jeering tone, and with a wild discordant laugh. "Methought thou affirmedst thou couldst find a way into my dwelling."

"I do not yet despair of finding it," replied Richard.

"Fool!" screamed the hag. "I tell thee it is in vain to attempt it without my consent. With a word, I could make these walls one solid mass, without window or outlet, from base to summit. With a word, I could shower stones upon thy head, and crush thee to dust. With a word, I could make the earth swallow thee

up. With a word, I could whisk thee hence to the top of Pendle Hill. Ha! ha! Dost fear me now?"

"No," replied Richard, undauntedly. "And the word thou menacest me with shall never be uttered."

"Why not?" asked Mother Demdike, derisively.

"Because thou wouldst not brave the resentment of one whose power is equal to thine own—if not greater," replied the young man.

"Greater it is not—neither equal," rejoined the old hag, haughtily; "but I do not desire a quarrel with Alice Nutter. Only let her not meddle with me."

"Once more, art thou willing to admit me?" demanded Richard.

"Ay, upon one condition," replied Mother Demdike. "Thou shalt learn it anon. Stand aside while I let down the ladder."

Richard obeyed, and a pair of narrow wooden steps dropped to the ground.

"Now mount, if thou hast the courage," cried the hag.

The young man was instantly beside her, but she stood in the doorway, and barred his further progress with her extended staff. Now that he was face to face with her, he wondered at his own temerity. There was nothing human in her countenance, and infernal light gleamed in her strangely-set eyes. Her personal strength, evidently unimpaired by age, or preserved by magical art, seemed equal to her malice; and she appeared as capable of executing any atrocity, as of conceiving it. She saw the effect produced upon him, and chuckled with malicious satisfaction.

"Saw'st thou ever face like mine?" she cried. "No, I wot not. But I would rather inspire aversion and terror than love. Love!—foh! I would rather see men shrink from me, and shudder at my approach, than smile upon me and court me. I would rather freeze the blood in their veins, than set it boiling with passion. Ho! ho!"

"Thou art a fearful being, indeed!" exclaimed Richard, appalled.

"Fearful, am I?" ejaculated the old witch, with renewed laughter. "At last, thou own'st it. Why, ay, I *am* fearful. It is my wish to be so. I live to plague mankind—to blight and blast them—to scare them with my looks—to work them mischief. Ho! ho! And now, let us look at thee," she continued, holding the lamp over him. "Why, soh?—a comely youth! And the young maids doat upon thee, I doubt not, and praise thy blooming cheeks, thy bright eyes, thy flowing locks, and thy fine limbs. I hate thy beauty, boy, and would mar it!—would canker thy wholesome flesh, dim thy lustrous eyes, and strike thy vigorous limbs with palsy, till they should shake like mine! I am half-minded to do it," she added, raising her staff, and glaring at him with inconceivable malignity.

"Hold!" exclaimed Richard, taking the talisman from his breast, and displaying it to her. "I am armed against thy malice!"

Mother Demdike's staff fell from her grasp.

"I knew thou wert in some way protected," she cried furiously. "And so it is a piece of gold—with magic

characters upon it, eh?" she added, suddenly changing her tone; "Let me look at it."

"Thou seest it plain enough," rejoined Richard. "Now, stand aside and let me pass, for thou perceivest I have power to force an entrance."

"I see it—I see it," replied Mother Demdike, with affected humility. "I see it is in vain to struggle with thee, or rather with the potent lady who sent thee. Tarry where thou art, and I will bring Alizon to thee."

"I almost mistrust thee," said Richard—"but be speedy."

"I will be scarce a moment," said the witch; "but I must warn thee that she is—"

"What—what hast thou done to her, thou wicked hag?" cried Richard, in alarm.

"She is distraught," said Mother Demdike.

"Distraught!" echoed Richard.

"But thou canst easily cure her," said the old hag, significantly.

"Ay, so I can, cried Richard with sudden joy—"the talisman! Bring her to me at once."

Mother Demdike departed, leaving him in a state of indescribable agitation. The walls of the tower were of immense thickness, and the entrance to the chamber towards which the arched doorway led was covered by a curtain of old arras, behind which the hag had disappeared. Scarcely had she entered the room when a scream was heard, and Richard heard his own name

pronounced by a voice which, in spite of its agonised tones, he at once recognised. The cries were repeated, and he then heard Mother Demdike call out, "Come hither! come hither!"

Instantly rushing forward and dashing aside the tapestry, he found himself in a mysterious-looking circular chamber, with a massive oak table in the midst of it. There were many strange objects in the room, but he saw only Alizon, who was struggling with the old witch, and clinging desperately to the table. He called to her by name as he advanced, but her bewildered looks proved that she did not know him.

"Alizon, dear Alizon! I am come to free you," he exclaimed.

But in place of answering him she uttered a piercing scream.

"The talisman, the talisman!" cried the hag. "I cannot undo my own work. Place the chain round her neck, and the gold near her heart, that she may experience its full virtue."

Richard unsuspectingly complied with the suggestion of the temptress; but the moment he had parted with the piece of gold the figure of Alizon vanished, the chamber was buried in gloom, and, amidst a hubbub of wild laughter, he was dragged by the powerful arm of the witch through the arched doorway, and flung from it to the ground, the shock of the fall producing immediate insensibility.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIES OF MALKIN TOWER.

It was a subterranean chamber; gloomy, and of vast extent; the roof low, and supported by nine ponderous stone columns, to which rings and rusty chains were attached, still retaining the mouldering bones of those they had held captive in life. Amongst others was a gigantic skeleton, quite entire, with an iron girdle round the middle. Fragments of mortality were elsewhere scattered about, showing the numbers who had perished in the place. On either side were cells closed by massive doors, secured by bolts and locks. At one end were three immense coffers, made of oak, hooped with iron, and fastened by large padlocks. Near them stood a large armory, likewise of oak, and sculptured with the ensigns of Whalley Abbey, proving it had once belonged to that establishment. Probably it had been carried off by some robber band. At the opposite end of the vault were two niches, each occupied by a rough-hewn statue—the one representing a warlike figure, with a

visage of extraordinary ferocity, and the other an anchoress, in her hood and wimple, with a rosary in her hand. On the ground beneath lay a plain flag, covering the mortal remains of the wicked pair, and proclaiming them to be Isole de Heton and Blackburn, the freebooter. The pillars were ranged in three lines, so as to form, with the arches above them, a series of short passages, in the midst of which stood an altar, and near it a large cauldron. In front, elevated on a block of granite, was a marvellous piece of sculpture, wrought in jet, and representing a demon seated on a throne. The visage was human, but the beard that of a goat, while the feet and lower limbs were like those of the same animal. Two curled horns grew behind the ears, and a third, shaped like a conch, sprang from the centre of the forehead, from which burst a blue flame, throwing a ghastly light on the objects surrounding it.

The only discernible approach to the vault was a steep narrow stone staircase, closed at the top by a heavy trap-door. Other outlet apparently there was none. Some little air was admitted to this foul abode through flues contrived in the walls, the entrances to which were grated, but the light of day never came there. The flame, however, issuing from the brow of the demon image, like the lamps in the sepulchres of the disciples of the Rosy Cross, was ever-burning. Behind the sable statue was a deep well, with water as black as ink, wherein swarmed snakes, and toads, and other noxious

reptiles; and as the lurid light fell upon its surface it glittered like a dusky mirror, unless when broken by the horrible things that lurked beneath, or crawled about upon its slimy brim. But snakes and toads were not the only tenants of the vault. At the head of the steps squatted a monstrous and misshapen animal, bearing some resemblance to a cat, but as big as a tiger. Its skin was black and shaggy; its eyes glowed like those of the hyæna; and its cry was like that of the same treacherous beast. Among the gloomy colonnades other swart and bestial shapes could be indistinctly seen moving to and fro.

In this abode of horror were two human beings,—one, a young maiden of exquisite beauty; and the other, almost a child, and strangely deformed. The elder, overpowered by terror, was clinging to a pillar for support, while the younger, who might naturally be expected to exhibit the greatest alarm, appeared wholly unconcerned, and derided her companion's fears.

"Oh, Jennet!" exclaimed the elder of the two, "is there no means of escape?"

"None whatever," replied the other. "Yo mun stay here till Granny Demdike cums fo ye."

"Oh! that the earth would open and snatch me from these horrors," cried Alizon. "My reason is forsaking me. Would I could kneel and pray for deliverance! But something prevents me."

"Reet!" replied Jennet. "It's os mitch os yer

loife's worth to kneel an pray here, onless yo choose to ge an throw yersel at th' feet o' yon black image."

"Kneel to that idol—never!" exclaimed Alizon. And while striving to call upon heaven for aid, a sharp convulsion seized her, and deprived her of the power of utterance.

"Ey towd yo how it wad be," remarked Jennet, who watched her narrowly. "Yo 're neaw i' a church here, an if yo want to warship, it mun be at yon altar. Dunna yo hear how angry the cats are—how they growl an spit? An see how their een gliss'n! They'll tear yo i' pieces, loike so many tigers, if yo offend 'em."

"Tell me why I am brought here, Jennet?" inquired Alizon, after a brief pause.

"Granny Demdike will tell yo that," replied the little girl; "boh to my belief," she added, with a mocking laugh, "hoo means to may a witch o' ye, loikeaw the rest on us."

"She cannot do that without my consent," cried Alizon, "and I would die a thousand deaths rather than yield it."

"That remains to be seen," replied Jennet, tauntingly. "Yo 're obstinate enuff, nah doubt. Boh Granny Demdike is used to deal wi' sich folk."

"Oh! why was I born?" cried Alizon, bitterly.

"Yo may weel ask that," responded Jennet, with a loud unfeeling laugh; "fo ey see neaw great use yo're on, wi' yer protty feace an bright een, onless it be to may one hate ye."

"Is it possible you can say this to me, Jennet?" cried Alizon. "What have I done to incur your hatred? I have ever loved you, and striven to please and serve you. I have always taken your part against others, even when you were in the wrong. Oh! Jennet, you cannot hate me."

"Boh ey do," replied the little girl, spitefully. "Ey hate yo now warser than onny wan else. Ey hate yo because yo are neaw lunger my sister—becose yo're a grand ledy's dowter, an a grand ledy yersel. Ey hate yo becose yung Ruchot Assheton loves yo—an becose yo ha better luck i' aw things than ey have, or con expect to have. That's why I hate yo, Alizon. When yo are a witch ey shan love yo, for then we shan be equals once more."

"That will never be, Jennet," said Alizon, sadly, but firmly. "Your grandmother may immure me in this dungeon, and scare away my senses; but she will never rob me of my hopes of salvation."

As the words were uttered, a clang like that produced by a stricken gong shook the vault; the beasts roared fiercely; the black waters of the fountain bubbled up, and were lashed into foam by the angry reptiles; and a larger jet of flame than before burst from the brow of the demon statue.

"Ey ha' warned ye, Alizon," said Jennet, alarmed by these demonstrations, "boh since ye pay no heed to owt ey say, ey'st leave yo to yer fate."

"Oh! stay with me, stay with me, Jennet! shrieked Alizon. "By our past sisterly affection I implore you to remain! You are some protection to me from these dreadful beings."

"Ey dunna want to protect yo onless yo do os yo're bidd'n," replied Jennet. "Whoy should yo be better than me?"

"Ah! why, indeed?" cried Alizon. "Would I had the power to turn your heart—to open your eyes to evil—to save you, Jennet."

These words were followed by another clang, louder and more brattling than the first. The solid walls of the dungeon were shaken, and the heavy columns rocked; while, to Alizon's affrighted gaze, it seemed as if the sable statue arose upon its ebon throne and stretched out its arm menacingly towards her. The poor girl was saved from further terror by insensibility.

How long she remained in this condition she could not tell, nor did it appear that any efforts were made to restore her, but when she recovered, she found herself stretched upon a rude pallet within an arched recess, the entrance to which was screened by a piece of tapestry. On lifting it aside she perceived she was no longer in the vault, but in an upper chamber, as she judged, and not incorrectly, of the tower. The room was lofty and circular, and the walls of enormous thickness, as shown by the deep embrasures of the windows;

in one of which, the outlet having been built up, the pallet was placed. A massive oak table, two or three chairs of antique shape, and a wooden stool, constituted the furniture of the room. The stool was set near the fireplace, and beside it stood a strangely-fashioned spinning-wheel, which had apparently been recently used; but neither the old hag nor her granddaughter were visible. Alizon could not tell whether it was night or day, but a lamp was burning upon the table, its feeble light only imperfectly illumining the chamber, and scarcely revealing several strange objects dangling from the huge beams that supported the roof. Faded arras were hung against the walls, representing in one compartment the last banquet of Isole de Heton and her lover, Blackburn; in another, the Saxon Ughtred hanging from the summit of Malkin Tower; and in a third, the execution of Abbot Paslew. The subjects were as large as life, admirably depicted, and evidently worked at wondrous looms. As they swayed to and fro in the gusts, that found entrance into the chamber through some unprotected loopholes, the figures had a grim and ghostly air.

Weak, trembling, bewildered, Alizon stepped forth, and staggering towards the table sank upon a chair beside it. A fearful storm was raging without—thunder, lightning, deluging rain. Stunned and blinded, she covered her eyes, and remained thus till the fury of the tempest had in some degree abated. She was roused at length by a creaking sound not far

from her, and found it proceeded from a trap-door rising slowly on its hinges.

A thrum cap first appeared above the level of the floor; then a broad, bloated face, the mouth and chin fringed with a white beard like the whiskers of a cat; then a thick, bull throat; then a pair of brawny shoulders; then a square, thick-set frame; and Mother Demdike stood before her. A malignant smile played upon her hideous countenance, and gleamed from her eyes—those eyes so strangely placed by nature as if to intimate her doom, and that of her fated race, to whom the horrible blemish was transmitted. As the old witch leaped heavily upon the ground, the trap-door closed behind her.

"Soh, you are better, Alizon, and have quitted your couch, I find," she cried, striking her staff upon the floor. "But you look faint and feeble still. I will give you something to revive you. I have a wondrous cordial in yon closet—a rare restorative—ha! ha! It will make you well the moment it has passed your lips. I will fetch it at once."

"I will have none of it," replied Alizon; "I would rather die."

"Rather die!" echoed Mother Demdike, sarcastically, "because, forsooth, you are crossed in love. But you shall have the man of your heart yet, if you will only follow my counsel, and do as I bid you. Richard Assheton shall be yours, and with your mother's consent, provided—"

"I understand the condition you annex to the pro-

mise," interrupted Alizon, "and the terms upon which you would fulfil it; but you seek in vain to tempt me, old woman. I now comprehend why I am brought hither."

"Ay, indeed!" exclaimed the old witch. "And why is it, then, since you are so quick-witted?"

"You desire to make an offering to the evil being you serve," cried Alizon, with sudden energy. "You have entered into some dark compact, which compels you to deliver up a victim in each year to the Fiend, or your own soul becomes forfeit. Thus you have hitherto lengthened out your wretched life, and you hope to extend the term yet further through me. I have heard this tale before, but I would not believe it. Now I do. This is why you have stolen me from my mother—have braved her anger—and brought me to this impious tower."

The old hag laughed hoarsely.

"The tale thou hast heard respecting me is true," she said. "I *have* a compact which requires me to make a proselyte to the power I serve within each year, and if I fail in doing so, I must pay the penalty thou hast mentioned. A like compact exists between Mistress Nutter and the Fiend."

She paused for a moment, to watch the effect of her words on Alizon, and then resumed.

"Thy mother would have sacrificed thee if thou hadst been left with her, but I have carried thee off, because I conceive I am best entitled to thee. Thou

wert brought up as my grand-daughter, and therefore I claim thee as my own."

"And you think to deal with me as if I were a puppet in your hands?" cried Alizon.

"Ay, marry, do I," rejoined Mother Demdike, with a scream of laughter. "Thou art nothing more than a puppet—a puppet—ho! ho!"

"And you deem you can dispose of my soul without my consent?" said Alizon.

"Thy full consent will be obtained," rejoined the old hag.

"Think it not! think it not!" exclaimed Alizon. "Oh! I shall yet be delivered from this infernal bondage."

At this moment the notes of a bugle were heard.

"Saved! saved!" cried the poor girl, starting. "It is Richard come to my rescue!"

"How know'st thou that!" cried Mother Demdike, with a spiteful look.

"By an instinct that never deceives," replied Alizon, as the blast was again heard.

"This must be stopped," said the hag, waving her staff over the maiden, and transfixing her where she sat; after which, she took up the lamp, and strode towards the window.

The few words that passed between her and Richard have been already recounted. Having closed the casement and drawn the curtain before it, Mother Demdike traced a circle on the floor, muttered a spell,

and then, waving her staff over Alizon, restored her power of speech and motion.

"'Twas he!" exclaimed the young girl, as soon as she could find utterance. "I heard his voice."

"Why ay, 'twas he, sure enough," rejoined the beldame. "He has come on a fool's errand, but he shall never return from it. Does Mistress Nutter think I will give up my prize the moment I have obtained it, for the mere asking? Does she imagine she can frighten me as she frightens others? Does she know whom she has to deal with? If not, I will tell her. I am the oldest, the boldest, and the strongest of the witches. No mystery of the black art but is known to me. I can do what mischief I will, and my desolating hand has been felt throughout this district. You may trace it like a pestilence. No one has offended me but I have terribly repaid him. I rule over the land like a queen. I exact tributes, and if they are not rendered I smite with a sharper edge than the sword. My worship is paid to the Prince of Darkness. This tower is his temple, and yon subterranean chamber the place where the mystical rites, which thou wouldst call impious and damnable, are performed. Countless Sabbaths have I attended within it, or upon Rumbles Moor, or on the summit of Pendle Hill, or within the ruins of Whalley Abbey. Many proselytes have I made; many unbaptised babes offered up in sacrifice. I am high-priestess to the Demon, and thy mother would usurp mine office."

"Oh! spare me this horrible recital!" exclaimed Alizon, vainly trying to shut out the hag's piercing voice.

"I will spare thee nothing," pursued Mother Demdike. "Thy mother, I say, would be high-priestess in my stead. There are degrees among witches, as among other sects, and mine is the first. Mistress Nutter would deprive me of mine office; but not till her hair is as white as mine, her knowledge equal to mine, and her hatred of mankind as intense as mine—not till then shall she have it."

"No more of this, in pity!" cried Alizon.

"Often have I aided thy mother in her dark schemes," pursued the implacable hag—"nay, no later than last night I obliterated the old boundaries of her land, and erected new marks to serve her. It was a strong exercise of power; but the command came to me, and I obeyed it. No other witch could have achieved so much, not even the accursed Chattox, and she is next to myself. And how does thy mother purpose to requite me? By thrusting me aside, and stepping into my throne."

"You must be in error," cried Alizon, scarcely knowing what to say.

"My information never fails me," replied the hag, with a disdainful laugh. "Her plans are made known to me as soon as formed. I have those about her who keep strict watch upon her actions, and report them

faithfully. I know why she brought thee so suddenly to Rough Lee, though thou know'st it not."

"She brought me there for safety," remarked the young girl, hoping to allay the beldame's fury, "and because she herself desired to know how the survey of the boundaries would end."

"She brought thee there to sacrifice thee to the Fiend," cried the hag, infernal rage and malice blazing in her eyes. "She failed in propitiating him at the meeting in the ruined church of Whalley last night, when thou thyself wert present, and deliveredst Dorothy Assheton from the snare in which she was taken. And since then all has gone wrong with her. Having demanded from her familiar the cause why all things ran counter, she was told she had failed in the fulfilment of her promise—that a proselyte was required—and that thou alone wouldst be accepted."

"I!" exclaimed Alizon, horror-stricken.

"Ay, thou!" cried the hag. "No choice was allowed her, and the offering must be made to-night. After a long and painful struggle, thy mother consented."

"Oh! no—impossible! you deceive me," cried the wretched girl.

"I tell thee she consented," rejoined Mother Demdike, coldly; "and on this she made instant arrangements to return home, and in spite—as thou know'st—of Sir Ralph and Lady Assheton's efforts to detain her, set forth with thee."

"All this I know," observed Alizon, sadly—"and

intelligence of our departure from the abbey was conveyed to you I conclude by Jennet, to whom I bade adieu."

"Thou art right—it was," returned the hag; "but I have yet more to tell thee, for I will lay the secrets of thy mother's dark breast fully before thee. Her time is well nigh run. Thou wert made the price of its extension. If she fails in offering thee up to-night, and thou art here in my keeping, the Fiend, her master, will abandon her, and she will be delivered up to the justice of man."

Alizon covered her face with horror.

After awhile, she looked up, and exclaimed with unutterable anguish,

"And I cannot help her!"

The unpitying hag laughed derisively.

"She cannot be utterly lost," continued the young girl. "Were I near her, I would show her that heaven is merciful to the greatest sinner who repents; and teach her how to regain the lost path to salvation."

"Peace!" thundered the witch, shaking her huge hand at her, and stamping her heavy foot upon the ground. "Such words must not be uttered here. They are an offence to me. Thy mother has renounced all hopes of heaven. She has been baptised in the baptism of hell, and branded on the brow by the red finger of its ruler, and cannot be wrested from him. It is too late."

"No, no—it never can be too late," cried Alizon. "It is not even too late for you."

"Thou know'st not what thou talk'st about, foolish wench," rejoined the hag. "Our master would tear us instantly in pieces if but a thought of penitence, as thou callest it, crossed our minds. We are both doomed to an eternity of torture. But thy mother will go first—ay, first. If she had yielded thee up to-night another term would have been allowed her; but as I hold thee instead, the benefit of the sacrifice will be mine. But, hist! what was that? The youth again! Alice Nutter must have given him some potent counter-charm."

"He comes to deliver me," cried Alizon. "Richard!"

And she arose, and would have flown to the window, but Mother Demdike waved her staff over her and rooted her to the ground.

"Stay there till I require thee," chuckled the hag, moving, with ponderous footsteps, to the door.

After parleying with Richard as already related, Mother Demdike suddenly returned to Alizon, and restoring her to sensibility, placed her hideous face close to her, breathing upon her, and uttering these words, "Be thine eyes blinded and thy brain confused, so that thou mayst not know him when thou seest him, but think him another."

The spell took instant effect. Alizon staggered towards the table, Richard was summoned, and on his

appearance the scene took place which has already been detailed, and which ended in his losing the talisman, and being ejected from the tower.

Alizon had been rendered invisible by the old witch, and was afterwards dragged into the arched recess by her, where, snatching the piece of gold from the young girl's neck, she exclaimed triumphantly,

"Now I defy thee, Alice Nutter. Thou canst never recover thy child. The offering shall be made to-night, and another year be added to my long term."

Alizon groaned deeply, but at a gesture from the hag, she became motionless and speechless.

A dusky indistinctly-seen figure hovered near the entrance of the embrasure. Mother Demdike beckoned it to her.

"Convey this girl to the vault, and watch over her," she said. "I will descend anon."

Upon this, the shadowy arms enveloped Alizon, the trap-door flew open, and the figure disappeared with its inanimate burthen.

END OF VOL. II.

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